

a journal of desire armed

anarchy

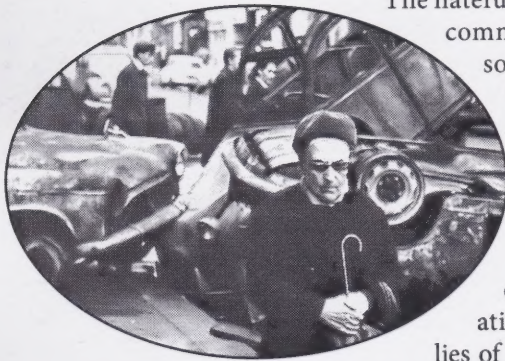
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For the **Abolition** of Police

A police force, where there are no crimes to discover and delinquents to arrest, will provoke or invent crimes... — Malatesta

PEOPLE INVOLVED IN LAW ENFORCEMENT ARE agents of the powerful against the weak, who readily mobilize and deploy arbitrary and unpredictable violence and destruction.



The hateful and demented pro-police comments made in mass and social media in the wake of the cops' fully exposed immunity from Ferguson to Staten Island (well, everywhere) show that better than any political treatise. The pro-police camp persists in perpetuating some of the most banal lies of authoritarian morality: The state exists to protect the weak from the whims of tyrants. The system of law and justice is impartial. Cops only arrest the guilty. The guilty deserve whatever the police do to them. Prisons are only for bad people...

Anarchists know (or should know) that the police are not only the first line of protection for the maintenance of capitalist property relations; not only the primary institution for the enforcement of dominant cultural norms through the targeting and (often extra-judicial) punishment of deviance; not only an increasingly militarized formation to quell social disturbances/riots/rebellions. Outside of the realm of wage labor, policing has always been the primary way any authoritarian and class-based society informs those trying to survive in it that their lives are not their own. The police are the most public face of the multi-tiered institutions of criminal justice that create and

reinforce the category of (law-abiding) citizen — a category that can be rescinded at any time, with any pretext. The police exist to remind citizens *and* criminals that whatever the ruling class and its supporters and lackeys do is legal.

Anarchists know (or should know) that individuals who enter institutions usually come face to face with possible conflicts between institutional norms and their personal integrity. Those who remain end up perpetuating those norms regardless of any possible intention to alter them. But the observation that institutions change people is not the whole story. Power corrupts, but the *already corrupt* and the *easily corruptible* seek to join powerful institutions precisely so they will have professional opportunities to exercise their corruption.

The laughable institutional excuse of supposed bad apples continues to be deployed at press conferences. These supposed bad apples are the ones who join the police in order to harass queers, beat up detainees, demand freebies from sex workers, steal from dealers, frame suspects, punitively deploy crowd control weapons, exercise disproportionate violence, and antagonize and terrorize non-compliant people — up to and including murder. And who then have the bad taste to get caught. But no Field Training Officer has to teach them how to do these things. When there's a too-big-to-be-ignored episode of alleged misconduct, all the good cops and their supporters line up with the bad apples, making every person standing with them complicit. Institutional self-preservation doesn't dissipate even a little in the wake of embarrassing multi-million dollar settlements to survivors of police abuse.

The momentum of the recent protests against police impunity has waned; a tactical reliance on emotional outrage at racist excesses coupled

On the Cover:

with a (deliberate?) lack of analytical focus on the quotidian functions of policing may have something to do with this (nevertheless, the constant placing of bodies in the way of the smooth flow of capital is to be heartily applauded). Various suggested reforms of the police — retraining, civilian oversight, increased ethno-racial/cultural sensitivity, anger management, etc — are incapable of addressing the problems inherent in the model of a professionalized police force that has a linear history of physically disciplining people perceived as social threats. In the US, this begins with attacks against (usually unarmed) natives and the creation of slave patrols, continuing through Jim Crow, extending into strike breaking, culminating in a generalized suppression of any form of socio-political and/or cultural dissent. Calls for better policing cannot be taken seriously in a context of racial profiling, the unleashing of brutality against anyone the police decide is uncooperative and/or undesirable, and a per capita incarceration rate that outstrips every other country in the world.

The most recent refusals of Grand Juries to hand down indictments against killer cops should make it abundantly clear that the criminal justice system and the standard operating procedures of policing and punishment are functioning *exactly as they are designed to* in a classist and racist society. Protesters whose messages and demands are geared toward making these institutions more human(e) presume that moral appeals have the potential to motivate those who make and enforce the law. But their targets don't have any ethical qualms about meting out harsh discipline or quashing deviance and dissent — that's a large part of what they signed up for; among prison guards, cops, legislators, and judges there's no seed of cognitive dissonance to exploit.

Initiating and furthering a serious discussion on the possibilities and ramifications of taking an explicitly abolitionist stance toward police is something that anarchists can do; a relentless critique of policing has always been



Carl Ingram

<http://www.CarlIngram.com/>

an analytical weapon in the anarchist arsenal. Many people are already divided by how they relate to the police. With a more explicitly radical analysis, there's a chance that anarchists can help nudge that polarization toward an irreversible breaking point.

for further reading:

Cop Block on Facebook

Fire the Cops, by Kristian Williams

Political Parties, by Robert Michels (from which is derived the Iron Law of Oligarchy)

"Wild Justice," by Bob Black (*ajoda* #72/73 at: theanarchistlibrary.org/library/bob-black-wild-justice)

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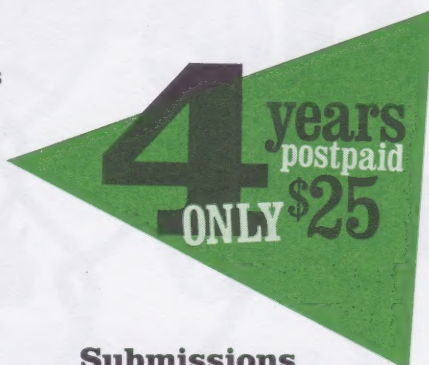
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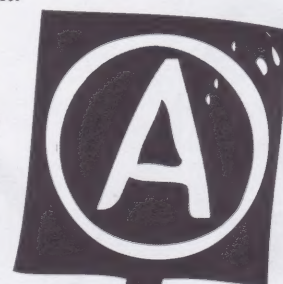
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Inside Anarchy

WELCOME TO ISSUE #76. WE NEED TO TAKE A MOMENT AND HONOR a person who supported this project almost from the start. David Koven, long-time anarchist pacifist, died late last year at the age of 96. For many years (but not recently) David was the companion of Audrey Goodfriend, whose appreciation/obituary appeared in #74. David died peacefully late last year in their daughter's home in Berkeley, where Audrey passed in 2013. It's never easy to note the passing of people or projects, not even the ones we don't necessarily like; they are reminders that our own demise can't be far behind. Howard Erlich, the editor of *Social Anarchism* (a project we only grudgingly respected), also died last year. During the 1980s, SA was one of the few regularly published anarchist publications in the US – and for that deserves an acknowledgment. Unfortunately, it also suffered from the iron hand of Professor Erlich, which resulted in an almost exclusively academic journal.

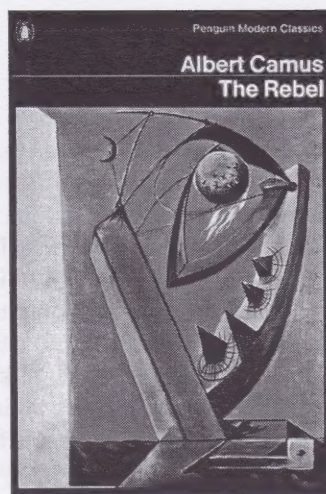
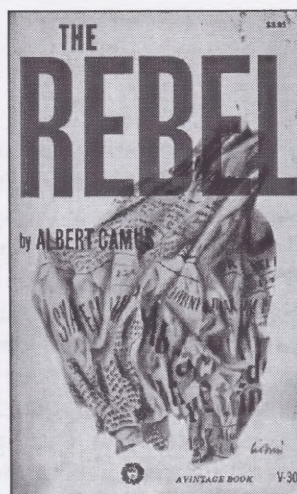
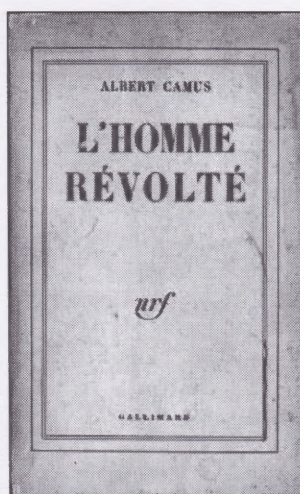
We received the news last fall that one of the three library subscription services we've used went bankrupt. Fortunately, none of their checks bounced.

Print media continue to suffer. We sadly note the passing into oblivion of the venerable (but over the last years, less and less interesting) *Freedom*, the longest-lasting English language anarchist periodical. Also disappeared are Dublin's *The Rag*, and Pittsburgh's *Steel City Revolt*. We're not yet ready to acknowledge the end of other projects that publish on a less regular schedule. Not gone, but hit hard, Toronto's *Upping the Anti* suffered a burglary last fall.

Speaking of periodicals, readers will notice a decline in media reviews this time. This is due less to a lack of interest than it is to brutal work schedules and various health challenges. Work sucks, and growing older is no picnic.

Our single essay this time is Lupus Dragonowl's skewering of Identity Politicians. We tried to start a much-needed debate on the topic back in 2005 with Lawrence's "Preliminary Theses for a Longer Discussion on Essentialism and the Problem of Identity Politics" (*ajoda* #58), to no avail; there was only one actual response, limited to the internet. Except for a brief and unsatisfying flurry that came out of a CrimethInc. convergence in 2009 (which resulted in some pushback against the APOC scene), not much serious attention has been paid to Identity Politics as a site of potential polarization among anarchists until a few brief debates in Occupy (mostly around the Decolonize initiative) and then last year with ugly incidents in Oakland, Portland, and Denver. These continual intrusions of Maoist practice into anarchist spaces have never been more important to denounce, and Lupus explains the hows and whys.

Postage costs continue to increase, but we're doing our best to hold our prices down. We still love donations (thanks Kevin and *Slingshot*), so keep us in mind the next time you win the lottery. And don't forget to take our survey. **A**



He Never Does What He Should

The Rebel
by Albert Camus
(Any of many editions)

Review by Squee

IN 1951, ALBERT CAMUS HAD ALREADY dealt thoroughly with the questions of nihilism, rebellion, revolutionary politics, and anarchism. It may surprise many anarchists that this existentialist philosopher (mostly known for his novel *The Stranger*) was quite familiar with anarchism and was himself a frequent supporter of anarchists. As such, he fits the fellow traveler category and, with his book *The Rebel*, continues to be a relevant challenge to anarchists today.

More context as to the nature of Camus' relationship with his anarchist contemporaries can be found here: libcom.org/library/albert-camus-anarchists. To summarize, Camus is someone who not only openly supported anarchist-sindicalist organizing, but was excommunicated by the existentialists for criticizing their Marxist tendencies. He provided material and ideological aid to anarchists

and received their support in return. When Franco had sentenced anarchists to death in Spain, Camus organized a speech, covertly inviting Andre Breton by networking with anarchist-sindicalist and prisoner support organizers. When a French anarchist was brought up on charges of subversion for producing an anti-militarist poster in 1954, Camus spoke at the trial as a character witness. He consistently published his writing in anarchist papers and shamelessly discusses anarchism in his more public works.

The content of *The Rebel* primarily focuses on the individual's struggle to find meaning in a world that becomes inherently meaningless without a God, which he refers to as the Absurd. He performs his analysis using examples of individuals and groups who were coming to grips with the metaphysical, historical, and aesthetic situations resulting from nihilism. He leads each inquiry into the matter by asking if it is possible for the individual to rebel without rationally attempting to justify murder and other so-called crimes, by which he means harming others.

What Camus is further asking with this question is whether or not it is possible to move coherently from the rebellion of a subordinate to a social-political ethics without betraying what he identifies as the principle and initial choices involved with rebellion: the affirmation of human dignity despite death as a potential consequence. Reasoning that this makes the value of human dignity a value which transcends the individual — since they are willing to die in order to affirm it — rebellion for Camus has a universal quality that ought to lead to solidarity with others in revolt. From there, what he wants to demonstrate is that rational attempts to justify murder or crime (or to justify the irrationality of one's desires) can only contradict these initial principles, since it would violate that universal and transcendent value of human dignity.

The text is divided into five main subsections: the Rebel, Metaphysical Rebellion, Historical Rebellion, Rebellion and Art, and Thoughts at the Meridian. The first defines what exactly Camus means by rebellion. The second deals with those whose rebellion is limited to

the imagination (or, metaphysics): poets, philosophers, and others who are rebellious in thought more than in action. The third expands the points made in the previous subsection, but demonstrates how these can be, made in the context of (mostly revolutionary) politics. The fourth section carries this into the world of aesthetics. Thoughts at the Meridian, though short, is where Camus outlines the moral limits to rebellion that he finds acceptable, using syndicalist trade-union organizing as a primary example of coherent rebellion. A wide range of figures are scrutinized, both real and mythological: Prometheus, Cain, De Sade, Baudelaire, Stirner, Nietzsche, Marx, Bakunin, and many others.

Murder and crime are still highly debated topics among anarchists; sometimes in the controversies around tactics and violence, sometimes in outlining a coherent moral opposition to the State and its supporters. Many of the arguments still seen today are embodied in Camus' exemplary characters and situations: summarized, analyzed, and judged inadequate. The questions of nihilism, which for some have become major questions in their theoretical approach to anarchism, are subject to a more thorough inspection than in any other anarchist text I have read.

For fans of Max Stirner and Egoism generally, *The Rebel* offers a perspective that is somewhat unheard of. Camus argues that with Stirner "Individualism reaches a climax," and, that along with all the nihilist rebels, it ultimately leads to a kind of collective suicide. This is not argued on the basis of orderlessness, it is argued on the basis of Stirner's own vision for the Unique. Camus quotes Stirner, "You [the German nation] will be struck down. Soon your sister nations will follow you, when all of them have gone your way, humanity will be buried, and on its tomb I, sole master of myself at last, I, heir to all the human race, will shout with laughter." Camus wants to surpass this vision of individual triumph, he wants to learn how to live in the desert

which is created after subjecting the world to an Egoist critique.

To investigate the potentials for living in such a situation, Nietzsche and the Surrealists are used to conclude the book's section, Metaphysical Rebellion. Camus refers to the rebellious path taken by Stirner and Nietzsche as "Absolute Affirmation." If Stirner affirms only the Unique, Nietzsche goes further and constructs a philosophy based on affirming everything. While it is unclear if Camus


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considers this an improvement upon Stirner's thinking, he credits Nietzsche with accurately diagnosing the illnesses of modernity as nihilism. Regardless, Camus concludes that Nietzsche's Will-to-Power still leads to the same wall of collective suicide as Stirner's Unique.

The section Metaphysical Rebellion ends in transition from the thinkers who acted less to the thinkers who acted more: the Surrealists provide the vehicle for this transition and offer a space for Camus to present his concluding arguments in their metaphysical form before

demonstrating them in their historical form. It is here that Camus' fear can be felt as he discusses Surrealist affirmation of the irrational murders and suicides its members authored. What he wants to show is that when the most Egoist conclusions are acted upon, they found actions that are worthy of as much condemnation as those that are rebelled against. While Camus will later demonstrate this causal chain at the collective level with Nazism and Marxism, it is clear what he is searching for when he is contemplating this at the Individual level: a principle of moderation.

Moderation is discussed in the final sections of *The Rebel* to clarify its place in Camus' philosophy. In analyzing the nature of the rebellious act, Camus concludes that moderation is already present in restricting the rebel from themselves becoming another ruler. It is found in the realms of metaphysical, historical, and aesthetic rebellion when the initial value of human dignity that transcends the individual is adhered to. More interesting for us, moderation is the connection that ties Camus to the anarchists. What Camus reveres in the anarchist is the simultaneous embrace of individualism and the moderation inherent in the praxis of trade-unionism (and presumably more broadly in prefigurative politics). His philosophy is anti-Revolutionary and pro-Insurrectionary; it is anti-Collectivist and pro-Individualist. Camus is an accomplice in revolt against the Western tradition. This is the result of his refusal to negate the conditions which found and moderate rebellion, the Absurd condition that we each face individually, but together.

Overall, reading through this work has value even beyond Camus' arguments. It is a comprehensive history of modern rebellion, a framework for considering a range of contemporary questions, a reference book for other interesting authors, and an excellent demonstration of clear and rigorous writing. 

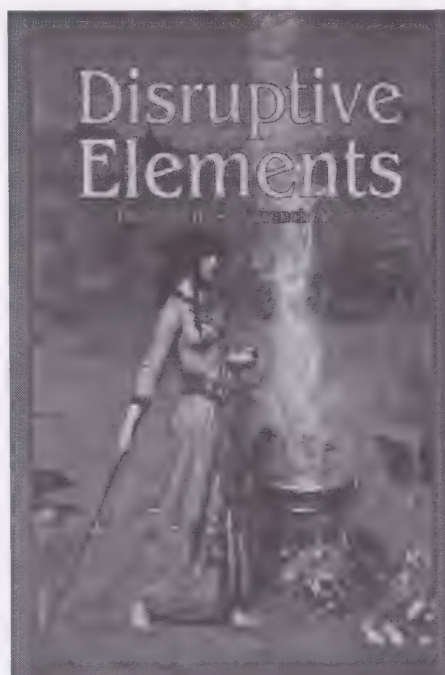
Dousing a Flame

WHAT PASSES FOR AN ANARCHIST scene in the United States remains dominated by the ideological Left, which attempts to reduce the riotous ungovernability and diversity of anarchist thought and practice to a mere adjunct of democracy worship, identity politics, and other forms of social group-think. Rather than the paradigm of Left versus Right, the real battle is between liberty and authority, as our wise ancestors knew. Assertion of the unique self, the critique of ideology and organization, and the rejection of techno-economic worship have grown impressively in recent years but still form minority positions among those embracing the anarchist idea. Looking back over the panorama of modern history, we need to ask: was this always the case?

Following up on *Enemies of Society*, published by Ardent in 2011, and likely the work of the same disruptive elements, this book aims at recovering a largely buried heritage of libertarian anarchist writings from roughly the mid-nineteenth to the mid-twentieth century, sometimes building on the work of previous excavators such as Max Nettlau. The focus this time is France, owing to a perceived “French tendency to take anarchist ideas to their most unrestrained conclusions” (14). The emphasis is on “internally-consistent anarchist thought” (vii) as expressed in previously untranslated or difficult-to-obtain writings, presented here through the labor of many translators including Vincent Stone, a principal organizer of the project, who provides an introduction.

The editors of the *Disruptive Elements* compilation are clear about who the adversary is within the anarchist milieu: NEFAC collectivism, academic postmodernism, politically correct social justice

militants, and the AK Press monopoly are among the elements forming a holy alliance that serves to uphold a sanitized and respectable anarchism that is paradoxically and amusingly described both as deodorized and smelling of carrion (ii)!



Disruptive Elements: The Extremes of French Anarchism

Ardent Press, 2014
267 pages; paper \$20.00
(Available through Little Black Cart)

Review by Ralph Dumont

Ranged against this leftish orthodoxy we find celebrations of *flâneurs*, criminals, and squirky individualists, spiced with caustic, sometimes scatological humor. The book is divided into sections dealing with specific individuals — Ernest

Coeurderoy, Joseph Déjacque, Zo d'Axa, Georges Darien, Octave Mirbeau, Émile Pouget, Albert Libertad, Émile Armand, and Pierre Chardon — including short pieces or excerpts by the authors preceded by introductory text and capsule biographies. Other sections are concerned with illegalism, the critique of collectivism, free sexuality, and Max Stirner's influence in France. There are many other figures represented besides those to whom a section is devoted, but most of them make only a brief appearance on the stage. The material presented in this book, although voluminous, is by no means exhaustive. The editors have intended it not as an exercise in nostalgia but as an action in the form of “guerrilla historicism” that will aid in freeing anarchist thought and practice from the hobbling influence of leftist and liberal or social democratic ideologies. They mostly bypass the more Marxist-associated currents of the modern French avant-garde such as Surrealists and the Situationist International. Guy Debord had criticized anarchism as an “ideology of absolute liberty.” The realm of absolute liberty — a fine sounding term indeed — is what *Disruptive Elements* aims for. It is a term with maximalist utopian reach that characterizes anarchy very well, although anarchism as an ideology always falls short of it.

In conventional historiography Pierre-Joseph Proudhon stands as a key figure in the origins of anarchism. *Disruptive Elements* strives to demolish his reputation as a founding father of anarchism, declaring that his legacy is actually more connected to socialism. It also lambastes him for his antisemitic, misogynist, and homophobic crochets. The most devastating critique of Proudhon is in the essay about his repressed sexuality,

which analyzes the origins of his animus against women and homosexuality. Kropotkin and his followers in London also come in for scorn for their rejection of the illegalists. If Proudhon is the principal punching bag, then his foil is Stirner. The two are specifically contrasted in Maxime Leroy's "Stirner versus Proudhon." Max Stirner himself flayed Proudhon enthusiastically. Many of the figures in this collection were influenced by Stirner, whose *Der Einzige und sein Eigentum* first appeared in French translation in 1900.

Nietzsche had also been translated into French in the 1890s. We can only imagine how new and exciting these ideas must have seemed at the time. One of the essays in the Stirner section is "The Theory of the Individual in Chinese Philosophy: Yang Chou" by Alexandra David-Néel, an adventurer who traveled extensively in Asia and studied Asian philosophies through a lens of anarchistic skepticism. In her essay she describes Yang Chu, who lived in the State of Wei around the time of Confucius, as a kind of ancient Chinese Max Stirner. Unfortunately, there is an error of misplacement in the editing of the book here, because the essay appears on pp. 125–129, while the introductory material concerning David-Néel is on pp. 178–179!

The end of the turn of the twentieth century seemed outwardly an era of peace and progress during which the bourgeois regime stabilized its rule in the Third Republic after nearly a century of revolutionary and counterrevolutionary upheavals, and France ambitiously expanded its overseas colonial empire. But forces of negation were still at work, and the period also saw numerous violent illegalist actions, such as bombings and assassinations as well as the heists carried out by Marius Jacob and,

somewhat later, the auto-bandits known as the "Bonnot Gang." The French state carried out repression against anarchists and their publications in the 1890s, prompting many individuals to seek asylum in London. Prison terms were meted out even for nonviolent acts such as speaking one's mind in print. Those who carried out violent actions could expect much harsher treatment, including transportation to Devil's Island; the guillotine, which was the fate of some of the Bonnot bandits; or extrajudicial exe-

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cution, in the case of Bonnot himself. The calamity of the World War of 1914–1918 brought even greater repression and, with the plagues of bolshevism and fascism in its aftermath, the beginning of the long eclipse of anarchism globally.

The voices in this collection do not belong to a uniform pantheon of unsullied heroes. There is a share of folly, backsliding, and early promise belied by later ignominies. Pouget, who had once defended Ravachol and Vaillant, wound up as a leading theorist of syndicalism and creature of the CGT. The radical novelist Darien somehow became a fan of Henry George's "single tax" scheme and a participant in electoral politics. But most of them were uncompromising to the end.

Disruptive Elements provides a not-too-distant French mirror for the benefit primarily of anarch readers in the United States, and perhaps more broadly, the Anglophone world at large. French

anarchist attention to conditions and events in the United States appears several times in these pages, most notably in "The Servile War" by Déjacque, an analysis of America on the verge of civil war that imagines an alliance of southern slaves and northern proletarians against the authority of both slaveowners and capitalists, a possibility that can be considered utopian in hindsight, although it is certainly a consistently anarchist position. Déjacque, who visited the United States, saw for himself the horrors of slavery in

Louisiana and hailed John Brown as a modern Spartacus. But he was no booster of the American republic and its "union" cause. In an obituary of Paul Chardon, America is described as having been "once the land of liberty" (177) and home of numerous experimental utopian settlements. Perhaps this is a reference to the relatively modest size of the

state machine prior to the Civil War and major industrialization, at least compared with the European monarchical empires of that time. Apparently there was still enough liberty to spare for anarchists and other malcontents fleeing from tyranny in Europe and its colonies. When Clement Duval made his harrowing escape from Devil's Island, where did he eventually find refuge? In the United States.

This brings us to an interesting comparison of France and the United States, and their revolutions. E. Bertran offers an individualist analysis of the French Revolution and arrives at the conclusion that "the liberty of the people is not my liberty." (209) The revolutions of France, beginning with the Great Revolution of 1789 and continuing through the course of the nineteenth century, resulted in despotisms repeatedly. You could say that modern leftism is a product of a generalized extension of the French Revolution to the rest of the world. The

American revolution and its Empire of Liberty also has a messianic mission. Both countries lay claim to be beacons of democracy in the world, although by now the American model has subsumed the French one. The French revolutionary tradition is centered on a secular republican state in battle with remnant Catholic clerical/feudal power, whereas the American tradition began with the diversity of Protestant nonconformism feeding into capitalistic individualism set loose on a vast continent tamed through pitiless racial warfare. In the States the Left has always played a much smaller role. The term “libertarian,” originally coined by Déjacque as a synonym for anarchist, somehow transmogrified into a nonreligious political conservatism in late twentieth-century America. Manuel Devaldès wrote of an anarchist individualism versus authoritarian (“bourgeois”) individualism. (191) Whether or not you wish to characterize contemporary pro-capitalist “libertarians” as bourgeois, reclaiming the name from them is probably a lost cause. And anarchists clearly never had a corner on the term “liberty” itself, which appears on the banners of the revolutions that brought the mer-



A portrayal of the Bonnot Gang robbing Société Générale Bank in Paris.

either Trotskyist or Stalinist. Marxism, both in the form of Party Communism and as a cultural presence in the academy, became a dominant force in France from 1930s into the 1970s before yielding

the tales of the illegalists are indeed stirring, and many of us will still root for bank robbers with a revolutionary agenda

chant classes to the forefront of power in both countries.

The Dadas and Surrealists are mentioned a few times, in connection with André Breton’s admiration for Darien’s novels and in the revival of interest in the Marquis de Sade. Many aspects of the Surrealist project had at their core a natural anarchist affinity, but the leading lights of Surrealism perversely hitched their wagon to Marxist ideologies,

increasingly to the various poststructuralist and postmodernist (post-Maoist) leftisms. *Disruptive Elements* turns us on to the good shit that came out of France, but the irony is that a lot of the bad shit, Marxist or post-Marxist, also came to us courtesy of the “French connection.” The latest emanation of fashionable nonsense is Tiqqun, which the editors of this volume also call bullshit on. France seems to have lost its special status as a

factory of revolution. Maybe that’s not an entirely bad thing.

The tales of the illegalists are indeed stirring, and many of us will still root for bank robbers with a revolutionary agenda. But even in this field leftists have stolen the show. When, in recent memory, the exemplary act makes us think more of the Red Army Faction than of the Bonnot Gang, it may have run its course.

One of the more interesting sections of the book is the one on anarchy and sexual freedom, particularly relating to the history of utopian ideas in connection with sexual relations, and also touching on naturism. The two figures who stand out here are Charles Fourier (also referenced in other sections) and the Marquis de Sade. Quite a nice pair of extremists. All of the authors in this section are male, and they are supportive, as befits true libertarians, of the sexual freedom of women as well as men, but the paucity of material by female writers does seem a little odd (this applies to the collection as a whole). Rirette Maitrejean is acknowledged as an important figure but is not included. There are also passing references to Pauline Roland’s journal *La Voix des femmes*, and to the women, named in footnotes in the Guérin essay, who wrote pamphlets provoked by Proudhon’s anti-feminism. One of the aspects of the world we live in today that stands in contrast to the period covered by the book is the prominence of feminism. Contemporary feminism has become entrenched to the extent of being one of the dominant ideologies of our time and now forms an integral part of the Left juggernaut that impedes our path. An individualist anarchist analysis of how, when, and why the feminist movement went wrong could easily be a book unto itself.

Disruptive Elements has its lacunae, some of the editing is sloppy, and maybe it could have used an index, but the project is worthy and impressive, and it succeeds. Further efforts in this vein are to be welcomed. The world needs more disruption — bring it on! (A)

Judging Books by their Covers

Spectacular Capitalism: Guy Debord and the Practice of Radical Philosophy

by Richard Gilman-Opalsky
Minor Compositions, 2011
133 pages; paperback. \$14.00

—and—

Precarious Communism: Manifest Mutations, Manifesto Detoured

by Richard Gilman-Opalsky
Minor Compositions, 2014
139 pages; paperback. \$23.00

Review by Matt Lucas

THE WORLD AFTER THE SITUATIONIST International can be bifurcated, like the group itself, into two camps: the artists and the communists. The commies kicked out the artists for not

of Illinois, are long *détournements*. The first is a reputed reshaping of the *Critique of the Gotha Programme* by Marx; the latter a retake on *The Communist Manifesto*. According to “A User’s Guide on *Détournement*” (by Guy Debord and Gil J Wolman, 1956; reprinted in Knabb’s *Situationist International Anthology*) there are two types of *détournement*:

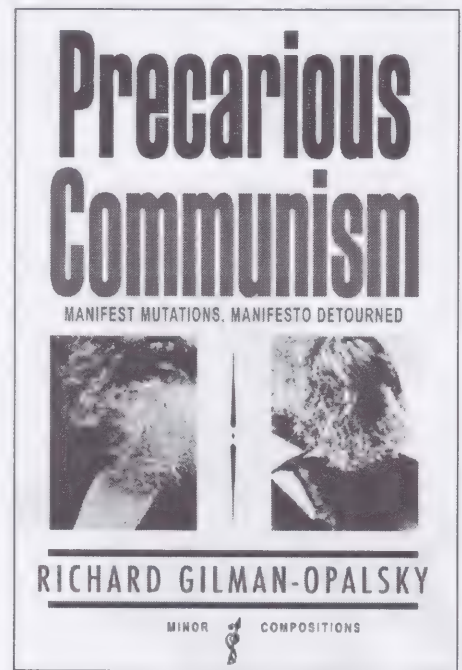
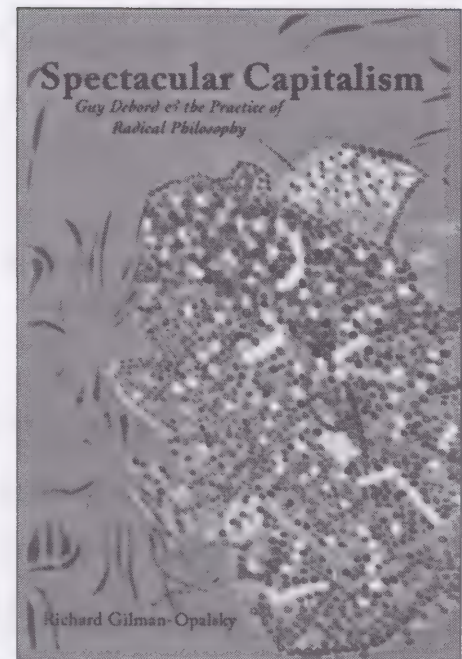
Minor *détournement* is the *détournements* of an element which has no importance in itself and which thus draws all its meaning from the new context in which it has been placed. For example, a press clipping, a neutral phrase, a commonplace photograph. Deceptive *détournement*, also termed premonitory-proposition *détournement*, is in contrast the *détournement* of an intrinsically significant element, which derives a different scope from the new context.

The professor is engaging in a longer work of the second type, attempting to extend the original work in new directions. However, what he missed

Gilman-Opalsky does not discard a Marxist analysis of capitalism, pointing to the ways in which the beginnings of Anarchism and Marxism overlapped

being politically savvy and the Marxists continued on their aesthetic-less way. Richard Gilman-Opalsky’s *Spectacular Capitalism* and *Precarious Communism* update this split between art and politics. Both, according to the professor of political philosophy at the University

out in the article was the third rule: “*Détournement* is less effective the more it approaches a rational reply.” The two books are logic-driven pieces arguing for the importance of the SI (*Spectacular Communism*) and for a new type of communism (*Precarious*



Communism). But neither has strong enough reference to their origins. The Gotha critique is barely recognizable in *Spectacular Communism*, and *Precarious Communism* only shows its *Manifesto* roots in a rewriting of the first and last line (*Precarious Communism* work is also

much longer). It is in the contrast between the old and the new from which deceptive *détournement* derives its power. Additionally, and here is where the real separation between art and politics is revealed: the book jacket covers are horrendously ugly — and not in a smart self-referential “I’m so hideous that I capture your attention” sort of way. It is far more likely that Autonomedia, the

publishing house that created the Minor Composition series, hired a graphic design intern from the ’90s to do the covers; after all, if it worked for Hakim Bey it should permanently work for everyone else. The cover of *Spectacular Capitalism* is the color of neon green acid highlighted with a vomit of colorful bubbles that makes the viewer queasy. The cover of *Precarious Communism* is

What is striking, then, is Gilman-Opalsky’s understanding that underlying “Debord’s theory of the spectacle is that what we see in the world — essentially how the world is architected — is a reflection of triumphant ideologies” (98). Here Gilman-Opalsky shows us that the world is ideology materialized. What then can we say about his books? What sort of ideology creates them? Their covers? Their content?

While I may, perhaps unfairly, harp on Gilman-Opalsky’s sense of style, the actual content of both books is decent, with *Spectacular Capitalism* being the weaker. Aesthetics aside, it is worth taking a look at what Gilman-Opalsky is trying to say.

In *Spectacular Capitalism*, composed of four relatively short chapters, Gilman-Opalsky takes on Baudrillard (infamous for his emphasis on the simulation, the simulacrum, and hyper-reality), rightfully critiquing the French philosopher because he “makes too much out of the fake” (51) and pointing out that “[s]imulacra are, by definition distinguishable from real events... the actual existence and constant possibility are not sufficient causes for adopting reality agnosticism” (50). For Baudrillard there is only the Simulation: the unreal; the actual consequences don’t matter, evidenced in Baudrillard’s theory that the Gulf War did not happen. While interesting, and exposing the ways in which the world of the stage is presented, Baudrillard misses the concrete events. People did actually die in the Gulf War, bombs did actually fall. While the western world’s experience of the war might have been through simulation, and therefore removed from direct experience, there was an actuality to the war, as Gilman-Opalsky correctly points out.

Gilman-Opalsky goes on to make several other strong points in his following two chapters, arguing “that the lack of interest in revolution does not signify extant satisfaction with society, but rather, the general acceptance of a

this is the reason why there has been no revolution yet: it is not that people are happy with their lives but that they believe that they can make their lives better via the false claims of the spectacular capitalist economy



the lower half of Marx’s famous bearded face and the lower portion of some other bearded man. The cover artists decided not only to portray Marx in a powerful light, but also the author himself; the back of the book offers the reader an unappealing grainy portrait of the author. Set with a red typeset and a white background, the book brings to mind a diseased candy cane.

As for *détournements*, there is nothing particularly striking, new, or effective about the form of these two pieces. Their structure does nothing to add to or develop their original content, and the attempt to frame them in the tradition of *détournements* was a grievous aesthetic mistake. This lack of awareness is a reflection of Gilman-Opalsky’s political ideology and his tendency toward the logical and to the structure, rather than the emotional and the form.

false claim. This false claim, that upward mobility is always ready at hand... is supported and maintained by a monopolization of the realm of appearances and that always presents it as true" [76]. This is the reason why there has been no revolution yet. It is not that people are happy with their lives as they are, but that they believe that they can make their lives better via the false claims of the spectacular capitalist economy.

For Gilman-Opalsky the creation of situations (the basis for the Situationists) was to accomplish two goals: "to reach people on an emotional level with situations that create moments of raw feeling and thought... and to create situations that open up a space for criticism and collective action" (81). This secondary point should be taken note of again to reinforce, not only what Debord and Wolman said about the weakness of logical arguments within art, but also the way in which people are brought into things. Capitalism is able to grab people, first and foremost, by holding onto their raw feelings and thoughts; then comes the work and the machinations of exploitation.

While these points are necessary, they are not needed in Gilman-Opalsky's book. Why not? Because they have been said before and better in Debord's and Vaneigem's.

The last chapter then closes with eleven poorly worded theses which make me want to whine about Gilman-Opalsky's writing ability, and hammers home his lack of style.

While a sense of fashion might not be the professor's strong suit, *Precarious Communism*, the stronger of the two works, does contain a number of salient points, particularly because the book feels so contemporary. The bibliography reinforces this with Camatte, Foucault, Ardorno, Butler, Debord, Deleuze, Monsieur Dupont, Halloway, Harvey, Kristeva, Ranciere, Perlman, and Zerzan all in attendance. It is a

bibliographical party of the coolest kids who are against the state and capital. Gilman-Opalsky notes the recent waves of struggle in the world and also takes on Myspace and Facebook. His examination of technology (such as smartphones) is worth noting, particularly in the way in which it influences work as the "obligations and anxieties of work can reach you everywhere, at any moment during your wakeful state. You make a stand. You do not reply until Monday morning, but your psyche is already colonized, you anticipate the work..." (25). Furthermore Gilman-Opalsky highlights the precarious and problematic nature

possibility of revolution itself, he does not discard a Marxist analysis of capitalism, pointing to the ways in which the beginnings of Anarchism and Marxism overlapped – Bakunin translated Marx, and Kropotkin, Goldman, Malatesta etc "made dependable use of Marx's analyses of capitalism" (119). Gilman-Opalsky sees the two groups as intertwined: "we must understand that a communist who distrusts and rejects state power as destructive and repressive is very much an anarchist, just as every good anarchist is also much of a Marxist" (122). Put bluntly, *Precarious Communism* is a modern marriage – for better or worse, for

"obligations and anxieties of work can reach you everywhere, at any moment during your wakeful state. You do not reply until Monday morning, but your psyche is already colonized, you anticipate the work"

of class analysis: it "guarantees nothing, not even a good understanding of what is happening in the real world of human conflict, and class identity is not the only (or even necessary) potentially revolutionary self-understanding" (19). Class analysis is also seen as failing because of "all the precarious people standing face to face with one another today, none of them comprise a really revolutionary class" (58). This is a departure from both Marx and Monseieur Dupont; the former sees the proletariat as the revolutionary class while the latter says that there is an essential working class in key industries. While Gilman-Opalsky is uncertain about the revolutionary subject and the

richer or for poorer, for revolution or not – of contemporary anti-state communism and anarchism. This is Gilman-Opalsky's strength. His weakness? The aesthetics. *Precarious Communism*, in which he posits the creation of a new form of communism, is simply a rebranding of anti-state communism and anarchism. It is cumbersome in the mouth and indicative of the ways in which the academic world, along with the political world, needs to create new identities to classify itself — but without having an understanding of how identity works. Naming oneself is fine, but what matters is the form of that identity; what has yet to be done is to add relevant style. **A**

You Shouldn't Have. No, really, you *shouldn't* have.

Thank You, Anarchy: Notes from the Occupy Apocalypse

by Nathan Schneider

University of California Press, 2013

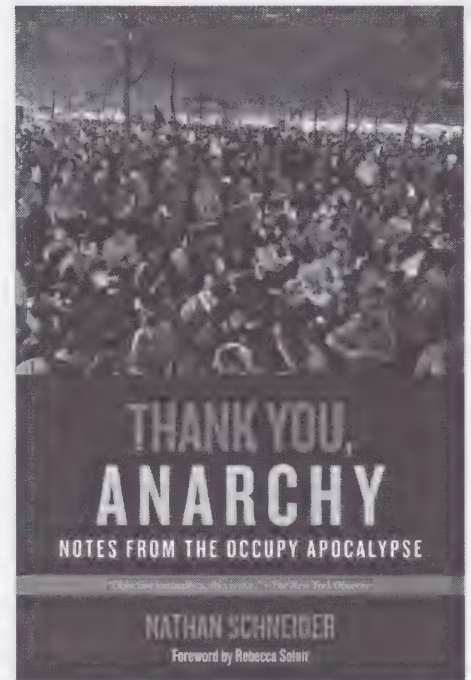
211 pages; paperback. \$24.95

Review by Lawrence Jarach

AFTER MENTIONING SCHNEIDER'S book in the last editorial, I thought it might be more fair to read it all. Browsing through one of the few remaining independent bookstores in the East Bay, I found a copy at not-quite-full price, so I (reluctantly) purchased it and began reading it the same day. My previous frustration (I had referred to it as the culmination of "the truncating of supposedly anarchist practice into an inoffensive package for an allegedly alternative political sphere") did not dissipate in the least after forcing myself to read it from front to back — and then many parts a second and third time to be certain I remembered his mischaracterizations correctly so that I wouldn't quote him out of context. Already about half way through my first pass, I was reminded of having to read Bookchin's twenty-year old scattershot and defamatory *Social Anarchism or Lifestyle Anarchism* (probably five times); in both cases there was something (major or minor) to object to on almost every page, sometimes in every paragraph.¹ At 61 pages, Bookchin's excoriation was a model of focus compared to the repetitive (and in many places painfully dull — and not just because of its autobiographical nature) 200-plus pages

of Schneider's paean. And whereas the Director aimed his truculence at other anarchists (in a self-defeating effort to berate us all into submission), Schneider is clearly writing for other journalists, socially engaged Catholics, Marxists, social democrats, liberals, and academics; in other words, people with even less of a clue about anarchism than Schneider (like most American ersatz intellectuals, Schneider can count on being at least a couple of pages ahead of his readers in the teachers' guide). Many academics — no doubt attracted to the publisher's stamp of approval and correspondingly high price (the hardcover edition is a mere \$60) — are probably still looking for ways to use the Occupy phenomenon to pad their publishing credits, but require an eyewitness-participant-chronicler to fill them in on the things they still can't understand, especially that whole No Demands weirdness. Significantly, such a creature is known in the social sciences as an *informant*.

In terms of actual anarchist ideas and practices, there's so much wrong in Schneider's meandering prose that to catalog and refute even half of them would certainly require a 200-page book of its own. In addition, any decent critique would necessarily have to situate TYA within the context of similarly misleading writings by an obnoxiously endless supply of other de facto left-wing social democrats and semi-leninists who pose as anarchists.² Such a project might be an amusing exercise, but is best left to someone with more patience for detailed research. Readers here will need to remain satisfied with my usual condensed snark.



My first bit must necessarily take on the author's religiosity. Beginning on the cover, Schneider exhibits his idiosyncratic use of terms (in this case reinforced with etymological fundamentalism) that most readers might find jarring; the subtitle, obviously playing on the fears and anxieties of his targeted readership, not so very subtly perpetuates the mainstream association of anarchy with chaos. In popular culture, *apocalypse* is used to convey a widespread disaster (extreme weather, nuclear and/or biological accident/war, zombies); post-apocalyptic fiction is geared toward examining the responses of ordinary people to an extraordinary (usually quite chaotic) series of events.³ Perhaps as an unconscious (?) mitigation, TYA's

Forward is by disaster scholar Rebecca Solnit, another mainstream social democrat masquerading as an anarchist.⁴

"Etymologically," we are told, "the lifting of a veil is what the word *apocalypse* refers to; after that, one can't go back unchanged. The preceding world has passed, and a new revelation is at hand" (6). So *an* apocalypse is not a disaster after all (and so, perhaps, "anarchy" isn't either), but any event(s) of World Historical importance, that forever changes (presumably positively, in keeping with Schneider's messianism) the people involved. Schneider probably thinks there's also a teleological significance involved somewhere. In relation to what most of the rest of us likely consider rather mundane, Schneider's flowery prose points to a kind of second coming: "everything felt in some sense religious, charged with a secret extremity and transcendence" (31), and "there the god of ordinary life was dead, resurrected in the business of self-reliance" (32). It's never surprising that religious people will frame their experiences in religious terms, but this kind of hyperbole is surely a bit off-putting to secular readers. For people who've never been part of a festival of the oppressed, it must seem like some crazy, unprecedented, earth-shattering event, maybe even a little frightening. Schneider, by trying to capture at least a part of that wild freedom, ends up exaggerating the importance of the exotic quality of what he thinks of as anarchy. Really, though, it's just the addition of an exotic spice (his diluted "anarchy," made palatable) to an otherwise banal smorgasbord of Social Justice Activism. Perhaps us veterans (I've been a conscious anarchist longer than Schneider has been alive), given our experiences of a few decades of involvement in this anarchy stuff, are just less in love with these allegedly novel possibilities. This is not to say that Occupy Oakland wasn't often interesting and frequently exciting (in comparison, the Berkeley and San Francisco

variations were dullsville), but the forms of self-organization that so many people latched onto (without knowing — or caring — about where they came from),⁵ were already fully entrenched as deliberate foundational tactics among conscious anti-authoritarian activists at least since Seattle. Schneider missed all that; he was too busy converting to Catholicism, and

human nature itself..." (61, my emphasis)? The question that immediately springs to mind is, Who's he been listening to? Who's been trying to pass off that load of self-serving bullshit as history?

The idea that "indigenous tribal councils" can provide a model of *any* kind of democracy — when democracy is a decision-making process reserved for

in terms of actual anarchist ideas and practices, there's so much wrong in Schneider's meandering prose that to catalog and refute even half of them would certainly require a 200-page book of its own

becoming embedded in, the world's most oppressive and hierarchically structured religion.

As a decent journalist, he knows that there were plenty of antecedents, that the form of (allegedly) direct democracy embodied in the General Assembly didn't spring from nowhere; due to his lack of experience, however, he also has no real understanding of how they are *supposed* to work versus how they have *actually* worked in various contexts, or how they've been modified to adapt to particular circumstances. He merely catalogs what others have told him, missing all the problems raised about them, and which (especially principled anarchist) participants have had to suffer through. How else can he casually say that "Anarchic open assemblies like the GA trace their roots (*more or less fictitiously*) to indigenous tribal councils, ancient Athens, Quakerism, feminism, the New Left of the 1960s, the civil rights movement, the antiwar movement, and

citizens — is colonialist, imputing to "tribal" people (as if they were all so similar to one another that all meaningful distinctions and self-understandings can be flattened or otherwise ignored) a specialized deliberative — and highly Eurocentric — strategy where one might not exist at all (and where members of the so-called tribe probably don't conceive of it in those terms; even calling them a *council* is colonialist). Ancient Athens, a slave-holding society where women (understood as defective men), children, slaves, and foreigners were excluded from the *demos*? Quakers, where decision-making is a form of religious obligation and worship, where Friends believe that their decisions are not their own, but are actually made by the Holy Spirit working through them? Which of the thousand-and-one varieties of feminism? The New Left, with its dominant not-so-egalitarian ideologies of Maoism and Anti-Imperialism? Which part(s) of the civil rights movement? As

far as I know, neither the NAACP, nor SLCL, CORE, SNCC, the Panthers, or Deacons used consensus-based direct democracy. Which “anti-war movement”? And which contemporary, reputable, non-PhD-decorated anarchist has the audacity to refer to something as ridiculously irrelevant as “human nature”? Such an incoherent and internally inconsistent string of antecedents flies in the face of history, but hey, what difference does it make to have a few mischaracterizations when you’re trying

made a proposal, others could counter with questions, amendments, concerns, and, finally and most seriously, blocks – vetoes, essentially. In the absence of a serious concern or a block, the proposal passed. When that happened, the human amphitheater would burst into applause and perhaps a triumphant chant in celebration of the wonder that hundreds of people had just managed to agree about something. (60-61)

Unfortunately, the fixation on the process and its accompanying exhilaration of free participation served to mask the

theory and history and what Occupy meant for anti-state radicals⁷ but the looming prospect of a repetitive fourteen- to twenty-page review left me rather unhappy, as well as pre-emptively exhausted. I gave up on the idea of a comprehensive rebuttal, and have settled instead for using the remainder of this review to comment on his inaccurate and/or idiosyncratic use of three anarchist colloquialisms (in the order in which he uses them).

The first is *spectacle*. In the almost five decades since the Situationist Guy Debord published *Society of the Spectacle*, the word has permeated radical oppositional discourse. Briefly, the Spectacle is the organization of appearances to help maintain and extend the regime of commodity exchange; it’s more than advertising and mass media portrayals of how to resolve unhappiness. More important than having even a rudimentary understanding of how the false and fantastic (as in derived from fantasy) require and reinforce boredom and anxiety, it is inexcusable not to recognize that the term is never used as a positive description. Schneider must have heard some radicals somewhere use it and became aware of its importance. Perhaps he even thought he understood it, but his usage proves otherwise. Rather than being uncomfortable with how the mainstream media would portray Occupy, he almost gloats that “the spectacle would be the *process* itself (8), and “Liberty [Square, aka Zuccotti Park] had become a society of spectacle — a place to be *seen*, and to be *recorded*, and to be *famous*” (83, my emphasis). Schneider seems to think that this kind of semi-institutionalized voyeurism is acceptable, even laudable. Like other activist types, he’s preoccupied (sorry) with mass media attention, seemingly unaware of how that particular aspect of the Spectacle is often the first place of recuperation (inverting potential opposition into the appearance of opposition and then stripping it of any possibility of actual opposition through

Schneider is clearly writing for other journalists, socially engaged Catholics, Marxists, social democrats, liberals, and academics; in other words, people with even less of a clue about anarchism than Schneider

to create populist mythology? Maybe he should have thrown in something about the greater good... No wonder he ended up working for the Jesuits.

Schneider isn’t a bad writer. Here he captures some of the excitement that drew more and more regular folks into the Occupy phenomenon.

Or maybe the proper metaphor was that of a therapy session. People who’d never felt listened to in their lives got the cathartic opportunity to alternate between unloading long-pent-up polemics in the General Assembly and expending their rage at the cops’ provocations, often teetering on the edge of a riot. They were rediscovering the social, rediscovering the satisfaction of ordinary conversations and interactions, as if waking up from a nightmare of isolation, frustration, and the Internet... When someone

actual insignificance of the majority of the proposals that were accepted by any given GA. Like most other unradical observers, Schneider totally misses the fact that virtually all of the agreed-upon proposals, these “something[s],” were smug statements of support for someone else’s struggle and/or declarations of feel-good populism. None of these celebration-inducing decisions meant much (if anything) in terms of risk or consequence, and so remained devoid of any actual meaning. Besides, it’s actually not that difficult to generate the requisite peer-pressure to induce the acceptance of empty pronouncements.⁶

It would have been tempting to mark every example of Schneider’s cluelessness (along with the occasional example showing that, on some level, he actually does understand aspects of anarchist

the reorganization of that appearance, especially in the form of a new product to be consumed, more especially aimed at the people attracted to the potential opposition). Indeed, I would suggest that by funneling the experiences of Occupy into an explicitly religious framework; by downplaying the radicality of refusing commodities, value-laden exchange, and representation; in short, by creating a self-reflective caricature of anarchy (thereby making it less dangerous and less frightening to social democrats and liberals), Schneider has (consciously or unconsciously, it doesn't matter) created his own example of spectacular recuperation.⁸

The next term he misuses is *ressentiment*. There's a reason people choose to leave this term in the French rather than using the English "resentment"; there's much more to it than simply being grumpy. The desire for revenge secondary to a perceived injustice is implicit in the French, making the self-destructive aspect clear. Again, it's not used as a positive description, at least not by radicals. Yet Schneider misunderstands it as positively motivational. He writes: "Thanks to the activist habit of resentment, acquired by seeing protest after protest fail to make headlines, the Occupiers had planned for creating their own media much more than serving anyone else's" (40; my emphasis). So we're back to the media... The problem for Schneider, Occupiers, or activists isn't that the media are a force of recuperation and the declawing of phenomena that challenge various aspects of the status quo — the problem is that the institutionalized corporate-sponsored/promoting outlets aren't paying enough attention to them. The model of an activist alternative is surely Indymedia, which was created to coordinate information about actions before and during — and since — the anti-WTO protests in Seattle in 1999.⁹ But this happened before Schneider's political initiation, so he missed that too.

My second encounter with Schneider was through a reposting of this article on anarchistnews.org after it appeared on his own website, wagingnonviolence. His extremely short and dismissive response is likely indicative of his lack of experience being challenged on anarchist fundamentals.

The government shutdown: An anarchist dream?

Nathan Schneider
October 1, 2013

IN HIS COMPLAINTS AGAINST THE WING OF THE REPUBLICAN PARTY THAT engineered the present government shutdown, Senate Majority Leader Harry Reid derided his opponents as "Tea Party anarchists." It's hard to decide who should be more annoyed — the Tea Party or the anarchists. In any case, Reid's remark is revealing of how the long tradition of anarchist philosophy has been thrown under the bus of U.S. political discourse, then rolled over, then dragged along in mangled form so as to be pointed at when doing so seems expedient.

Many may be surprised, for example, that actual anarchists aren't necessarily rejoicing over the U.S. government's latest form of self-annihilation. What they see taking place is a transfer of power from one kind of oppression, by a government that at least pretends to be democratic, to another that has no such pretensions. They point out that the shutdown won't stop the NSA from spying on us, or police from enforcing laws in discriminatory ways, or migrant workers and nonviolent drug users from being imprisoned at staggering rates. The parts of government that the shutdown strips away are among those that bring us closer to being a truly free, egalitarian society: food assistance to ensure that everyone can eat, health care that more people can afford, and even public parks, where some of our greatest natural treasures are held in common. Meanwhile, ever more power is being handed over to corporations that are responsible only to their wealthiest shareholders.

Historically, the so-called libertarians of the Tea Party and anarchists have common roots. The origins of both can be traced to certain freedom-seeking strands of the Enlightenment — including thinkers like Edmund Burke and Thomas Jefferson, as well as ones not normally taught in U.S. classrooms like William Godwin and Peter Kropotkin. It's an oddity that in the United States, the main current of libertarian thought has been twisted and inverted into a kind of monstrous stepchild. Rather than seeking an end to all forms of oppression, our libertarians want to do away with only the government kind, leaving the rest of us vulnerable to the forces of corporate greed, racial discrimination, and environmental destruction.

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Probably the worst of the three, however, is his horrid parody of *mutual aid*. This term is often as confusing to anarchists and non-anarchists alike, all of whom tend to remake its meaning in their own image(s). Mutual aid is not the same thing as charity; indeed, along with solidarity, it is the polar opposite.

distinguishes solidarity from charity). Without that possibility, it's not mutual aid. It really is that simple. Given that, what are Schneider's readers to make of this statement: "Want to see mutual aid? Look no further than the nearest suburban megachurch, where members find free day care, credit unions, employ-

Schneider's ode to "Anarchy" is nothing more than a recognition that a self-organized, horizontal, and maximally inclusive form of decision making is pretty neat

There's not much of an excuse for this misunderstanding, though, since the phrase isn't *conditional* or *one-way* or *institutional aid*; all of those are charity. The *mutual* in mutual aid means that in an act of generosity or sharing, there is an inherent potential and possibility of reciprocity (this is also what

ment services, good works for the poor, support in times of crisis, and access to a political machine. Every time I set foot in one of these places, it strikes me how they put radicals to shame" (114-5). Clearly, getting these goodies from any institution of bamboozlement is *conditional*: you have to be a member of the

congregation to get them (or at least the better ones). Strings-attached forms of community support based on religion have nothing in common with engaging in mutual aid and solidarity. The one-way aspect of charity is part of the reason that anarchists and other freethinking radicals have consistently condemned charity; it breeds, maintains, and extends semi-permanent dependence and subordination. This is hardly something any anarchist should favor, yet Schneider is *jealous of it*.

After all this, it's difficult to tell if Schneider is deliberately trying to make anarchist ideas and practices conform to the naive ideals of American liberals and leftists, or if he's just a fool. It doesn't actually matter; the end result is that Schneider's anarchists end up looking like impatient liberals who believe in an improved form of democracy, or social democrats who might think about — but who'd never actually get around to — breaking a bank window. There's nothing radical about any of that.

The best corrective to this dreary sojourn into distasteful burlesque is undoubtedly *I Saw Fire: Reflections on Riots, Revolts, & the Black Bloc* by Doug Gilbert (Institute for Experimental Freedom/Little Black Cart, 2014).¹⁰ Gilbert's eyewitness accounts of Occupy Oakland are an excellent reminder for anarchists about what really was exciting and relevant (among the fits and starts, the experiments, the challenges, and the unfortunately precipitous descent of parts of OO into unpaid social work). The refusal to accept police at the Plaza, the confrontations that resulted, and people standing their ground against disproportionate force and weaponry; the refusal to accept the legitimacy of City Hall to dictate or negotiate; the self-organization of various committees that helped create a semi-permanent infrastructure as well as those to engage with problematic interpersonal behaviors; the constant refusal to accept the many proposals to declare OO Non-Violent™;

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The legacy of one firebrand Russian émigré, Emma Goldman, has been traded for that of another, Ayn Rand. The result is that, in this country, what was once the mainstream of libertarian thought — socialist, democratic anarchism — has become so forgotten that the word “anarchist” can be mishandled for the sake of a congressional jab.

If anarchism were really just a preference for the absence of government, as many are led to assume, Reid’s usage would’ve been basically correct; the right-wing libertarians he’s up against would be thrilled to see our government become less of an obstruction to profiteers. But, since at least the Enlightenment, anarchism has meant much more than that. The rule — the *-archy* — it seeks to dismantle is also the rule of those with too much property over those with not enough, and of those whose privilege of race or gender gives them priority over others. Anarchists seek a society in which ordinary people can freely and democratically govern themselves, organizing to meet everyone’s basic needs.

Until that comes to pass, anarchists today disagree about how to relate to institutions like the pseudo-democratic U.S. government. Some, much like their counterparts on the libertarian right, advocate total withdrawal and non-participation, refusing to do things like vote or pay taxes. Others believe that for now government can be a means for pursuing anarchist-friendly ends; “it’s completely realistic and rational to work within structures to which you are opposed,” writes Noam Chomsky, “because by doing so you can help to move to a situation where then you can challenge those structures.”

Most people with anarchist tendencies fall somewhere in between. They’re less fixated on debating whether government is good or bad than on rebuilding political life from the ground up, starting in local communities that are connected through global networks. When the anarchist-inspired Occupy movement sprang up two years ago, commentators were quick to compare it to the Tea Party — and to judge it by whether, like the Tea Party, it elected politicians to office. But this standard seemed beside the point for Occupy participants, who tended to hold a different strategy for making change. The more useful right-wing analogue would be not the Tea Party but churches, whose massive political power stems from being effective centers of mutual support and community. Megachurch pastors generally keep aloof from elected office, but nobody can deny their influence.

Harry Reid’s utterance about “Tea Party anarchists” is a symptom of the amnesia that has befallen libertarian political thought in this country — an amnesia that helps the capitalist class grow stronger with each sequential fiscal crisis and each shrinkage of the social safety net. He might do well to reconsider his words. While in the long run the anarchist tradition seeks to cast mighty men like him from their thrones, in the short-term effort to ensure basic necessities for more people, Reid might find himself sharing a common cause with anarchists.

My reply:

Sorry Nathan, but some of us anarchists are not democrats. Some of us don’t even want “to ensure basic necessities for more people” if that means creating some sort of institutionalized

charity work. Some of us don’t care if the Republican or Democrats insult each other by invoking anarchism; we know they haven’t got a clue. Many anarchists don’t practice anarchy; rather they engage in various kinds of social democracy, which seems to be what you’re advocating as well. Far from clarifying what anarchism means, you’ve only further muddled the waters of reasonable discourse. I give this essay a C-.

Nathan Schneider

October 2, 2013 at 9:59 pm

I think I said pretty much exactly what you are: “[A]narchists today disagree about how to relate to institutions like the pseudo-democratic U.S. government. Some, much like their counterparts on the libertarian right, advocate total withdrawal and non-participation, refusing to do things like vote or pay taxes.”

My reply:

October 3, 2013 at 1:24 am

Nathan, you know that’s a bad faith argument don’t you? Anarchists shouldn’t disagree on how to relate to the US government; anarchists are opposed to its institutions, period. How we each choose to navigate through and around them are strategic issues, not theoretical issues. The theoretical principle is opposition. Anarchy means “no rulers,” not sometimes we can play nice with them. Sheesh.

Comparing the refusal of something voluntary (voting) with something that is not (paying taxes), and then comparing anarchists to right-wing so-called libertarians is nothing but confusion.

There was no further response.

the refusal to issue demands — all these aspects which formed Occupy Oakland's distinct (and perhaps dangerous) style is also what made it an attractive place to be for anarchists and other radicals.

In many ways what happened at Occupy in the US reflected what had been happening around the world in the preceding decade. In other ways it was a uniquely American phenomenon, especially in the left-populist social-democratic tendencies of many Occupiers.¹¹ Schneider met and worked with some self-identified anarchists who helped shape some of what he appreciated, but it just so happened that most of their organizational and ideological proclivities overlapped with the Catholic activism he was already committed to.

Ultimately, Schneider's ode to "Anarchy" is nothing more than a recognition that a self-organized, horizontal, and maximally inclusive form of decision making is pretty neat. That many activists (anarchists included) have adopted a form of horizontal self-organization is probably a positive thing. But to be recognized as an anarchist by other anarchists, a negative vision that includes the abolition of capitalism, the state, and relations built on institutionalized hierarchy should probably be included in there somewhere. This fundamental aspect of anarchism is almost completely absent from *TYA*, marking it as another in a long line of left-liberal caricatures of anarchism. ^(A)

Endnotes

- 1 Book-length responses to *SALA* include *Beyond Bookchin* by David Watson (Autonomedia/Black & Red/Fifth Estate, 1996) and *Anarchy After Leftism* by Bob Black (CAL Press, 1997; available in print from us and here: <http://theanarchistlibrary.org/library/bob-black-anarchy-after-leftism>). My own review of this nasty little screed, "Judging a Bookchin by his Cover-ups," appeared in *ajoda* #43 (1997), along with the first chapter of Bob's book and Paul Z. Simons' "Rare Praise; or Bookchin Hates Us (and... that's a good thing)." Despite such definitive and comprehensive rebuttals, however, Bookchin's absurdity continues to be used by otherwise intelligent commentators (most recently by Brian Morris in the latest *Anarchist Studies*; his summarization refers to a type of anarchism that "tended to repudiate socialism, the economy of the commons, and class struggle politics" — the latter attribute quite hilarious since Bookchin himself had definitively abandoned class struggle in the 1980s with his support of the Sandinistas and the Greens!). The enduring quality of this incoherent construction can perhaps be explained by the continual frustration of self-described *serious* anarchists at their inability to attract people to their stagnant and/or failing projects; like most other leftists, they can only attribute their lack of success to the wrecking and sabotage of vicious counter-revolutionaries. Such unself-reflective accusations are far older than Bookchin's fantasy.
- 2 The most consistently annoying for me: almost every person associated with the Institute for Anarchist Studies and professors Chomsky, Grubacic, and Graeber. For a long-overdue appraisal of Chomsky's wafer-thin adherence to anarchism (which also happily includes a good critique of the reactionary nature of his linguistics), see Bob Black's "Chomsky on the Nod," in *Defacing the Currency* (LBC Books, 2014), reprinted in *Modern Slavery* #3. Grubacic, in a move saturated with recuperation, scored himself the Chair of the Department of Anthropology and Social Change at the California Institute of Integral Studies in San Francisco (a school that embodies

the worst of hippie liberalism), and — in his project to reframe an allegedly radical perspective for liberals, and to assimilate some species of respectable leftism into a thoroughly middle-class framework — packed the faculty with a few of his safely inoffensive and photogenic pals like the innocuous but plausibly anarchist Jen Angel (Agency — see Embarrassments) and the Marxists Sasha Lilley (PM Press and KPFA), Boots Riley (formerly part of the Central Committee of the right-Maoist Progressive Labor Party; currently President of their front group, the International Committee Against Racism), and Chris Carlsson (co-founder of the crypto-Marxist *Processed World* and self-described founder of Critical Mass) — all of whom are "Adjunct Professors" without the benefit of a post-graduate degree (academic anti-credentialism aside, Dr G chose pro-Marxist cronyism over any pretense to anarchist integrity). For a good demolition of Graeber (who is apparently Schneider's personal informant about anarchist theory), see Wolfi Landstreicher's review of *Debt: the First 5000 Years*, also in *Modern Slavery* #3 (for information, see the Media section).

- 3 Unfortunately, these portrayals almost always exhibit a startling degree of allegiance to hierarchical social structures, showcasing the authors' reactionary adherence to leaders, a division of labor (often based on gender), and an unwavering faith in the nobility of Science. And don't get me started on the women who manage to keep their armpits hair-free...
- 4 Solnit is the author of *A Paradise Built in Hell: The Extraordinary Communities That Arise in Disaster* (Viking, 2010). As befits a middle-class liberal analysis, the overall tone in her relating the stories of regular people self-organizing to help each other get through disasters was one of surprise; for an often self-described anarchist, Solnit shows a remarkable ignorance of a century-long history of anarchist examinations, discussions, and examples of solidarity and mutual aid.
- 5 This could be seen in the numerous denunciations of "the anarchists" for tarnishing the (otherwise positive?) image of Occupy. Here is an excerpt from one response:

“...If anarchists hadn’t been involved in laying the foundations for the modified consensus process being used at virtually all meetings, including the GA, the decision-making process would be much more cumbersome and disempowering. If anarchists hadn’t been involved in helping to make the sub-committee infrastructures possible, they would become increasingly bureaucratic and centralized in the hands of politicians with personal and/or organizational agendas. If anarchists hadn’t been involved in making the Plaza a politician-free and police-free zone, there would not be the kind of autonomous and empowering space all of us have come to appreciate about OO.

“Anarchists at OO have been largely invisible as anarchists because we are not interested in converting people or recruiting them into little political cults. We prefer to help build community as caring individuals and affinity groups, to be known as trustworthy allies in the fight against all forms of interpersonal and systemic violence. We are present in all aspects of helping organize and sustain OO, making it a positive space, liberated from oppression – not in spite of, but BECAUSE we are anarchists.” (full rant here: <https://www.indybay.org/news-items/2011/11/06/18697957.php>)

6 Toward the end of the first GA at Occupy Oakland I attended, I was told by at least three different people sitting near me that I “could leave,” because I vocally objected to a ridiculously vacuous statement (which even included the shudder-inducing phrase “Shame!”) condemning the brutality of the NYPD during a clash with Occupiers there. Despite a muttered statement from a nearby Black woman that “the police act that way every day in my neighborhood,” mine was the only recorded objection (which I was not allowed to explain), and the completely meaningless proposal passed. The self-congratulatory applause was just as Schneider describes. This pointless proposal epitomized, at least for me, the uninteresting nature of a process narrowly focused on *form* while explicitly avoiding much in the way of *content* (although in its own way, this too epitomizes much of what passes for anarchist action).

7 Even though he accepts the state’s definition of violence, he still has a decent explanation of Diversity of Tactics: “a philosophy of organizing, primarily, not a fixed position on violence or nonviolence...” (68); if I had been his editor, I’d have insisted on deleting “violence or” to make the short explanation more accurate. He also conveys the excitement of the novelty of non-representational politics: “...rather than talking about [demands], they were talking about making assemblies like this one spread, around the city and around the county. The process of bottom-up direct democracy would be the occupation’s chief message at first, not some call for legislation to be passed from on high. They’d figure out the rest from there. I was still wrapping my head around this. Everyone was. This was a kind of politics most had never quite experienced, a kind apparently necessary even if its consequences seemed eternally obscure...” This is an important insight; if I’d been his editor, I’d have insisted he say more about this. For many newbies (himself included), the process of what ought to be transparent and fully inclusive was far more interesting than whatever particular agenda anyone might have had or wished to impose. But then, a mere three paragraphs later, Schneider reverts into a social democrat searching for a new constituency, showing that for all of his observations and insights into a radical rupture with representational politics as usual, he is still wedded to the old ways: “Maybe assemblies like this could even become a new basis for organizing political power on a larger scale (20-21).” The implication— which in Oakland was not lost on the liberals of MoveOn or the local Democratic Party machine— is that Occupiers would soon be ready to vote for Obama’s re-election... He also has plenty of thoughtful things to say about racism and sexism, and how they showed up— and were dealt with— in Occupy.

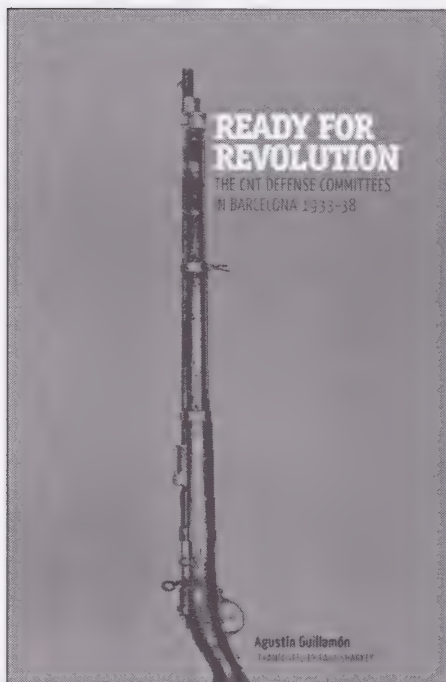
8 In the days of the Situationist International, people who were not part of it but who supported their ideas and practices were dubbed “pro-situs” (short for pro-situationists); members of the SI used it derisively. After the final dissolution of the SI in 1972, such folks have been referred to as “post-situs”; it’s no longer in the realm of insult. There needs to be a new term to refer to self-described radicals who have never bothered to learn anything about the SI and its members’ contributions to 20th century radical thought: how about the semi-insulting pre-situs?

9 Despite the devolution of almost all Indymedia sites into a free-for-all of competing banalities, incoherent rants, and self-congratulatory press releases that nobody reads, it actually began as a less ambitious self-organized mechanism to announce and coordinate various actions.

10 Also, a shorter, more focused account is the Anti-Bureaucratic Bloc pamphlet “Occupational Hazards: the Rise and Limitations of Occupy Oakland,” available from us.

11 Among other examples, this was most clearly manifest in a reliance on both formal and informal leadership, fetishizing an image of democracy, and the equation of property destruction with violence.

The Last of the Gang with a Gun in the Hand



**Ready for Revolution:
The CNT Defense Committees
in Barcelona, 1933-38**

by Agustín Guillamón;
translated by Paul Sharkey

AK Press/Kate Sharpley Library, 2014
261 pages; paperback. \$14.95

Review by Matt Lucas

THE SPANISH REVOLUTION FOLLOWING World War I was no historical mistake. It was created by and for the working people of Spain and was heavily influenced by Anarchism. As the longest lasting collective attempt to shed capitalism and usher in a new society, the period is of intense interest for contemporary anarchists and Guillamón, in *Ready for Revolution*, focuses on a particular groups of people within the revolution: the defense committees of Barcelona, which he defines as the “clandestine army of the revolution” (208). These committees were composed of affinity groups “... friends and/or militants, bound by ideological affinity, who took on tasks, principles, and tactics shared by the group” (28). These committees were the major building blocks of the revolution “... it is they who have directed the struggle, and in each barrio they are a rallying point and organizing center for revolutionary workers” (181).

While the book centers on the revolutionary cells, the writing is dull with long descriptions of meetings and a historical account of July 19-20 in 1936 which falls flat due to lack of context. It is hard to follow the ins and outs of what’s going on because the organizations and their positions in relation to each other isn’t fleshed out. While the book does include a helpful glossary at the end, I wish that Guillamón had given a more general historical account of the period before zooming in on the specifics.

However, there are however number of inspirational points. For example Guillamón notes, “during the days of *pistolerismo* (1920-1923), the average

CNT militant owned a pistol.... Since it was essential for self-defense purposes” (34). This stands in stark contrast to today’s anarchists who might not even own a BB gun. The Spanish revolutionaries were audacious as well. During the Worker Uprising in July a group of workers, in order to break through a blockade of machine guns, “used novel and risky tactics to mount a final, successful attack: climbing onto the flatbeds

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of three lorries they sent hurtling at top speed towards the line of machine guns, and then leaping from the vehicles, hurling grenades” (64). That they undertook such a daredevil attempt is outstanding. That they were successful in the assault is inspiring.

Not everything was fun and games during the Spanish revolution though. One of the major internal conflicts of the Revolution was "The Bread War," a three-sided conflict between "...the *barrio* committees, the cooperatives, and Comorera's projected but non-existent network, which he ordered the Barcelona Corporation to conjure out of nothing. The 'war' lasted from 20 December 1936 until the events of May 1937 (209).^{*}" Not only were the revolutionaries fighting against the Fascists and Franco but also were riddled with internal division about the access and rationing of food. Fighting is hard; it is even harder when hungry.

While food might have been hard to find, it was far easier to feed the animals. During the Worker Uprising in July an angry mob invaded a monastery, "...beating, knifing, or gunning down monk and military alike at point blank range, and then went on to mutilate the corpses" (68). Two officers were decapitated and one was castrated. One of the officers' head was brandished on a stick and part of a procession and while "a taxi ferried the sliced up remains of Captain Domingo to the zoo for tossing to the wild animals" (68).

Coupled with the text are some beautiful pictures of the barricades along with descriptions. Sandbags and bricks are neatly stacked on top of each other and small windows are designed to shoot out of. The barricades look to be about four or five feet tall and cover an entire city street at points. The barricades are not the only thing to look at, though. Guillamon also points out the decorative patterns of reinforcement tape put on windows. This tape would help prevent glass from shattering during bombings and intense conflict. There is of course a picture of uniformed anarchist militant and former mechanic Durruti entrenched in the game of war.

Guillamon attempts to understand why the revolution failed and in closing ends his historical account with a line from the



Anarchist militia members guard the barricades.

popular Wachowski Brother's movie *The Matrix*, "I never said it was going to be easy, Neo. I merely said that it would be the truth" (191). This ending really soured the book for me. It is tacky and cheesy. There is some good history in this book; however, the writing isn't clear and strong enough for it to engage anyone who isn't an anarchist or historian. (A)

^{*} Joan Comorera, pro-Stalinist Minister of the Economy in the semi-autonomous Catalan Generalitat




AGAINST IDENTITY POLITICS:

BY LUPUS DRAGONOWL

SPECTRES, JOYLESSNESS, AND THE CONTOURS OF RESENTIMENT

Identity Politicians (IPs) are a particular kind of leftist who use the *spectre*¹ of an identity-category (gender, race, sexuality, etc) as a lever to obtain power. In the sense discussed here, they should not be considered coterminous either with groups of people oppressed by identity categories, or even that subset who prioritise identity as a key site of struggle. Not all women, Black



¹ Ed. note: In *Der Einzige...* Stirner uses *spuk*; the English cognate "spook," while a decent enough translation in 1907, is currently an inappropriate (to say the least) option. We chose to use *spectre* (especially and deliberately retaining the British spelling) for its non-colloquial impact.

people, People of Colour (POC)², or members of other specifiable groups are IPs; not all feminists, anti-racists, or even separatists are IPs. Racism, sexism and other oppressions along identity axes are sociologically real, and not every person involved in the struggle against such oppressions is an IP.

Intersectionality – the recognition of multiple forms or axes of oppression, with complex

the fact that not all identity-related theories or movements need to be treated as Identity Politics does not mean that the influence of Identity Politics is trivial. The writers and activists discussed here not only exist, but their ideas and practices are often insidious and unfortunately widespread. Recognizing the importance and necessity of countering that deleterious influence is my motivation for writing this essay.

indigenous people were historically exterminated or assimilated because they fell outside the essence of what colonisers defined as having human value

It should here be emphasised that *this is not a critique of all forms of radical theory focused on racial or gender oppression*. This critique of IPs is by no means a critique of every position which focuses on a particular type of oppression (such as gender or race). Indeed, aspects of this critique are already present in a number of theorists who work with identity. For instance, the iconic anti-colonial writer Frantz Fanon argued that dualistic identities deform interpersonal relations and reproduce colonial power. While the struggle against colonial power is in fact an irreducible antagonism, and moves similar to those of IPs are strategically useful to fight it, the ultimate goal is to overcome such binaries in a future of the disalienated “whole [hu] man” (*Wretched of the Earth*, 238-9). He even articulates an almost Stirnerian claim that “the real leap consists in introducing invention into existence... I am endlessly creating myself” (*Black Skin, White Masks* 204). Similarly, in her later works, Gloria Anzaldúa argued that we are citizens of the universe, sharing an identity at a cosmic or subatomic level which is wider than any racial or social category (*This Bridge We Call Home*, 558). She came to criticise IPs for putting up walls and causing violence between groups (*Interviews*, 118). Neither of these authors arrives at a Stirnerian position: Fanon moves towards humanism, and Anzaldúa towards spiritual holism. However, their rejections of fixed identities overlap and intersect with mine, and serve to counter any suspicion that the rejection of Identity Politics entails a failure to take patriarchy, colonialism, or racism seriously.

Some feminists and Black radicals do not deploy the reactive affects discussed below, and instead seek to regenerate a force of

interacting effects – is an effective theoretical response to the problems of Identity Politics, but there have clearly been difficulties putting it into practice. In identity-linked movements, some people use intersectionality as a way to avoid the idea of principal contradiction, although occasionally in practice, people who claim to be intersectional end up treating one or two oppressions as primary. Nevertheless,

² Ed. note: There was a time when the term POC was inclusive of everyone who so self-identified (regardless of the term exacerbating certain unarticulated and unavoidable tensions about homogenizing the distinct experiences of people from diverse ethnic backgrounds, as well as the different ways those distinctions resulted in particular experiences of racism); in the past few years, however, the analytical category of Blackness/Anti-Blackness has become more popular in post-colonial discourse, especially among academics and activists. Michael P Jeffries writes that Anti-Blackness is “not simply about hating or penalizing black people. It is about the debasement of black humanity, utter indifference to black suffering, and the denial of black people’s right to exist.” The recent twisting of “Black Lives Matter” into “All Lives Matter” is a good example of how deeply the threat of a recognized Black humanity runs in the US. Despite the increasingly problematic term POC, we have retained it out of respect for the many who continue to embrace it as a self-description.

becoming to one degree or another (e.g. Mary Daly, Germaine Greer, Audre Lorde, Edouard Glissant). Others, notably dependency theorists and socialist-feminists, emphasise structural oppression, and struggle primarily against macro-structures – destroying capitalism, modernity, or the world-system – rather than focusing on the micro-politics of privilege. None of these approaches falls within what is being critiqued here. Academic approaches that draw on poststructuralism are also distinct from Identity Politics, in that they typically reject the primacy of any particular position. Academic theories related to oppression and identity – for example, Queer Theory, Critical Race Theory, Postcolonial Theory, and poststructuralist feminism – generally reject the idea of principal contradiction. The popularity of Identity Politics among radicals is partly due to the influence of academic work on identity, but, in academic spaces, most strategies of IPs would be rejected as essentialist (there are other issues of disagreement between post-left anarchy and poststructuralism, and between post-left anarchy and leftist types of structuralism, but these issues will not be covered here).

What is being criticised here is a particular *political style*, rather than a theoretical orientation – a style which labels as oppressive any deviation from a particular political line, which resorts almost immediately to public denunciation and exclusion, and which entails analytical and categorical rigidity, with corresponding boundary-policing. They can be distinguished from those whose approaches pursue open-ended becomings through the deconstruction of identity-categories (eg Heckert), which are *minoritarian becomings* rather than minority identities.

IPs see *one* axis of oppression as primary – the *principal contradiction*³. They demand that everyone focus on this axis. If someone fails to do so, IPs label them racist, sexist, white supremacist, patriarchal, etc. Ditto if they refuse leadership by the oppressed group (often meaning the IPs themselves), deviate from the IP's proposed political line, or criticise an IP. Such terms are deployed only by a member of the correct group, and are used to silence criticism – in the case of Patriarchy Haters, even the word *violence* is monopolised; those who oppose them “do not get to decide what counts as violence” (Voline). The idea of a principal contradiction leads to contempt for other issues and priorities. For instance, IPs in APOC, who focus on race, argue that “bleating about gender and class” is an instance of “diversionary tactics” to deflect from race (Anon, Open Letter). Early CWS workshops

in a sneaky semantic move, the moment the oppressed criticise the vanguard, they are no longer the oppressed, but objectively have become allied with the oppressors

treated issues other than racism as “distractions” (Dot Matrix), and Lorenzo Ervin demands that “anti-racism/anti-colonialism” be made “the core concern” of every activist group (315). He also dismisses anything outside his own agenda – from climate change to anti-fascism – as a “white rights” issue (133, 290, 302).

This political style boundary-polices identities in a way which renders them rigid and authoritarian. In many cases, fighting alleged racism or sexism *inside radical groups* is seen as the most important issue in radical politics – more important than fighting racism/sexism in the wider society. Ervin calls white radicals the worst kinds of racists, worse than hardcore conservatives (240, 272-3). Usually, these attacks take the form of militant struggle from the Maoist milieu: public denunciation and/or

3 Ed. note: The fundamental aspect of tension/destructiveness of class society; for traditional Marxists, it's bourgeoisie-proletariat within the framework of capitalism. When resolved through the teleological process of dialectical materialism (The Revolution™), the resulting synthesis is supposed to make the secondary (and tertiary, etc) contradictions like sexism, racism, and other ostensibly trivial forms of institutionalized oppression, melt away.



disruption, criticism/self-criticism, purging/exclusion, and the policing of micro-oppressions within the movement or scene; activists refuse to draw distinctions between allies and sympathisers, active enemies, and anything in-between. Ostracism, “the ultimate form of social control,” “is very infrequently used” in indigenous cultures (Peaceful Societies), but is used almost immediately by IPs for the smallest perceived transgressions.

Ervin’s repeated tirades against white anarchists provide a textbook case of this approach; his recent antics include labelling the entire Anarchist Black Cross racist because, at their recent convention in Denver, someone – at the request of Black political prisoner Jalil Muntaqim – read aloud a racist letter by a prison guard. Roger White’s *Post Colonial Anarchism* exemplifies this too, as do the faction of APOC who disrupted the CrimethInc convergence in Philadelphia in 2009, verbally abusing participants and damaging their belongings. Kill Whitey, one of the cheerleaders for this attack, later extended the disruptors’ accusations of “white supremacy” to Food Not Bombs and other anarchist groups, demanding that all such groups accept black leadership. The attack by activists from the Qilombo social centre on the CAL Press table at the Bay Area Anarchist Book Fair in 2014 is another case; subsequent comments online by Qilombo supporters clearly show the same rhetoric. Patriarchy Haters, the group which emerged from the Patriarchy and the Movement event in Portland, represent a feminist variant; their most notorious intervention was to shout down Kristian Williams at an unrelated event for criticising their political style in his article, *The Politics of Denunciation*.

Identity and Spectres

FROM A STIRNERIAN ANARCHIST PERSPECTIVE, at the root of the problem with IPs is the *spectre* – the use of an identity-category as a transcendent, abstract category which possesses and defines values. In Stirner’s theory, the problem of oppression is the problem that people value spectres and the things which benefit spectres – *instead of valuing the things which they desire*

as a “unique one.” All categories, words, concepts, can become spectres if they are allowed to possess and dominate us – even those which refer to our properties or attributes (59, 151). If people are defined as essentially and primarily *something* – whether it be humanity, whiteness, blackness, masculinity, femininity – this is always alienating, because the category is always “his *essence* and not he himself,” and therefore something alien (28), which requires “my valuelessness” (145). As a real person, each

for Stirner, binaries are artificial effects of spectres; for Marxists, they are correct theoretical reflections of binary structures within reality itself

of us is a processual being, an embodied self, located in a field of becoming.

From a Stirnerian perspective, systems of oppression such as racism and patriarchy are oppressive impositions of a particular spectre. Systems of oppression based on gender, race, and so on are *sociologically real*, but ultimately rest on *other people imposing a particular spectre* – treating another person not as a unique one, but as an instance of femininity, or “just another X.” Such systems entail valuing a particular category to the exclusion of others, leading to violence against those excluded.

However, the subordination of one spectre to another is not the base level of the problem; the problem is that spectres do not liberate or empower those who belong to the category they value, because those belonging to the category are valued only as instances of the category, not in their full, unrepresentable being. Hence, a *right of humanity* or a *white privilege* is never *my* right or privilege, because my *unique being* is not identical with humanity or whiteness. Even if I qualify as human or white (by falling within the extensional set of each category), there is some residue of uniqueness which is

prohibited by the spectre. Stirner's concept of the *un-person* expresses this clearly. An un-person falls within the category *human*, but is deemed to deviate from the essence, for instance by putting uniqueness before humanity. The un-person is not liberated, but jailed or hospitalised. Indigenous people always fell within the extensional set of humans, but were historically exterminated or assimilated because they fell outside the essence of what colonisers defined as having human value. *The hierarchising of representational categories is secondary to the initial oppressive gesture of subordinating real becomings to abstract categories.*

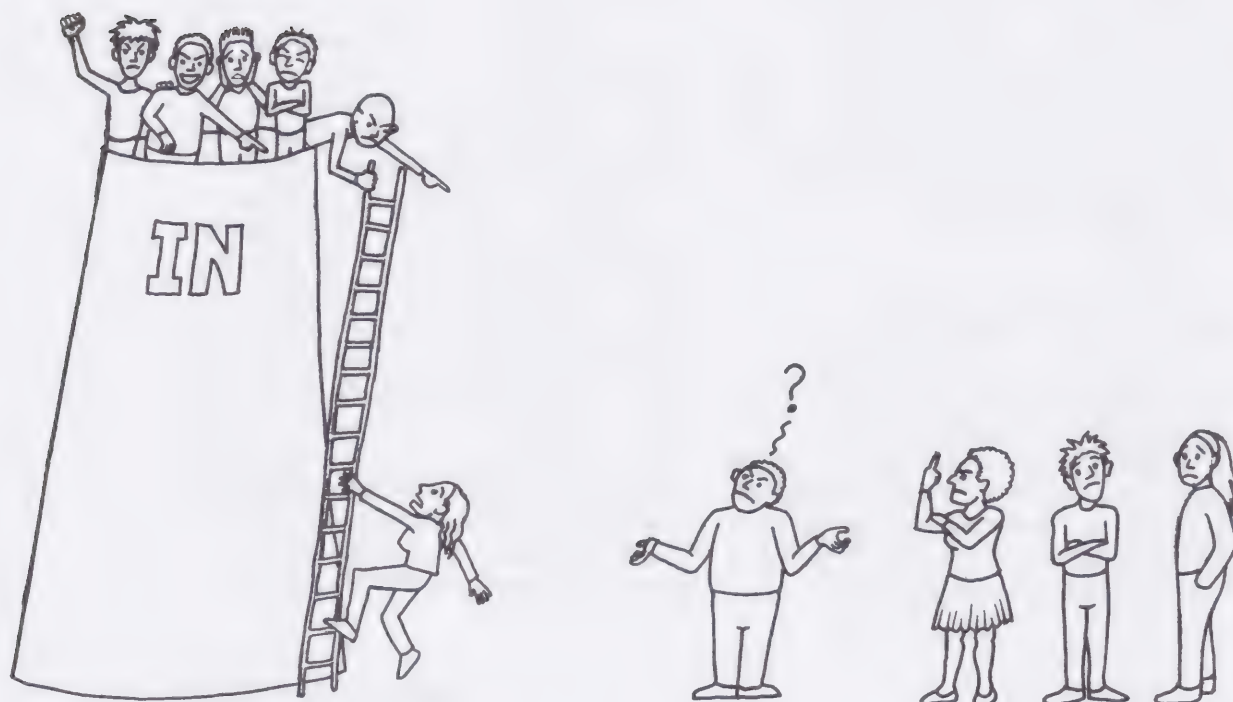
By analogy, white or male privilege is the privilege of the spectre, not of the extensional set. There is the spectre as a category, which usually has a set of normatively defined characteristics (such as masculinity, whiteness, humanity). And then there is the set of people who are classified as part of the spectre, who may or may not have these characteristics. A male white person becomes *un-white* or *un-male* when he ceases to conform to dominant ideas about the category. We might say that white privilege is not something which is *owned* by a person defined as white; it is owned by an alien spectre (112), the category of whiteness.

Spectres are connected to sovereignty, as theorised by Agamben. In sovereignty, a political ruler has the power to decide which instances of

the extensional set conform to the essence of the spectre and are accorded value – who is “person” (qualified life) and who is “un-person” (bare life). This leads to “abyssal thought,” the devaluing of those who fall outside dominant normativity (de Souza Santos). In Maoism and Leninism, sovereignty operates in the form of vanguardism or substitutionism. The Party or leader defines the spectre and hence claims to speak for all those covered by it – but such statements are really political decisions rather than empirical claims. The IP, the leader, claims to speak as and for POC, Black people, women, and so on – but never for all those covered by the category. In a sneaky semantic move, the moment the oppressed criticise the vanguard, *they are no longer the oppressed*, but objectively have become allied with the oppressors. An enemy of the IP becomes an enemy of the entire category — the spectre.

Identity Politics and Maoism

IPs IMAGINE SPECTRES TO BE MATERIALLY REAL. Whereas Stirnerians insist that becoming is unrepresentable, IPs follow Marx's view that it can be identified with an essence. For Stirner, binaries are artificial effects of spectres; for Marxists, they are correct theoretical reflections of binary structures within reality itself. The IP's style is descended from Maoism. Younger IPs



are unlikely to have been directly influenced by Maoism, but important elements of Maoist political grammar were imported into earlier forms of Identity Politics and continue to operate.

Maoists and IPs are strong structural determinists. This means that they work with a model of social life in which macro-social structures determine people's identities and political outcomes. For instance, Ervin says that any white radical has "middle class racial privileges... and it does not matter about their personal beliefs" (268). IPs deny that people exist as unique individuals at all; people are simply instances of spectres. As an APOC writer says, "It's completely arrogant and pretentious to think you are unique. You are just another white person" (Anon, Open Letter). People are taken to be effects of, and reducible to, particular social structures: these structures determine their material interests, which determine their unconscious investments, which determine their beliefs and actions. People's real, unconscious desires are always "racialized desires" stemming from "racialized, classed, and gendered subjectivities" (comments on Anon, Smack a White Boy Part Two). In the case of privileged people, desires are not to be liberated, but purified. In the case of oppressed people, what they desire is automatically, instinctively right — *provided* it follows from the spectre.

This approach depends on the conflation of the spectre (eg whiteness, masculinity) and the extensional set it covers (eg white people, men). Roger White asserts that "white, Christian men have held power and privilege" — without distinguishing between the spectres, the elite, and all members of the categories. And the founder of CWS writes of "the guilt that comes from being who I am: a white person of conscience in a white supremacist society" (Dot Matrix).

All of these positions entail the view that *we are our spectres*. As Williams argues, it classifies people as "particular types of people who are essentially those things," and reduces oppressed as much as abuser/oppressor to "political symbols used by others to advance some specific ideological line." Normatively,

anything which aids the oppressed spectre is good; anything which harms it is bad. The same action — silencing, violence, abuse, eviction — is praised in the former case and condemned in the latter. A person's intent is irrelevant; the real significance comes from the effect, as defined in the IP's frame. Duplicating the historic role of the activist or militant (Vaneigem, 111; Anon, *Give Up Activism*), the IP makes her/himself indispensable as an Expert on oppression, based on claimed knowledge of the spectre and the correct response to it.

Such spectres are used to channel the anger of the excluded into controlled political forms. Maoism is a power-politics of ruthless control, but it is seductively appealing to marginalised people because it contains a moment of empowerment. Especially when out of power, Maoism encourages the expression of accumulated anger against real oppressors such as landlords and government functionaries. This

occasional cases of insensitive or prejudiced comments or actions paint a misleading picture of a radical scene in which oppressive behaviour is pervasive and out of control

practice is the origin of the culture of denunciation, and the reason why Black and feminist groups in the '60s were attracted to Maoism. Once in power, however, Maoists cannot continue to allow attacks on power-holders. Instead they channel anger onto folk-devils, such as disempowered former oppressors, in carefully managed denunciation campaigns (Perry and Li, 7). In the Euro-American context this method takes the form of moral panics.

This contradictory role is also channelled theoretically. Maoists and IPs deploy a contradictory fusion of two incompatible ontologies: *realism* and *perspectivism*. Realists maintain that an external reality is knowable through rational methods by anyone, whereas perspectivists maintain that everyone's standpoint is

culturally unique, and there is no way to establish any standpoint as more true than others. Maoists/IPs are ontological realists in identifying the principal contradiction and depicting the actions of the privileged (which can be reduced to externally knowable structures), but perspectivist in their treatment of the standpoint of the oppressed: if a Black person says something is racist, it is racist (comments on Jarach et al); if a woman alleges abuse, the allegation is self-evidently true (comments on Black Orchid Collective). This turns women and Black people into Experts, to be unquestioningly listened to and obeyed – a position dehumanising for them as well as others. In contrast, the *real* meaning of a white person's or a man's actions is externally knowable, and intent is irrelevant.

There is method in this madness. In Maoist theory, knowledge is a fusion of experience, which comes from the masses, and rational theory, which comes from the vanguard (Mao, *On Practice*). In practice, this meant that knowledge emerging from mass meetings, denunciation campaigns, speak-bitterness campaigns, and so on was systematised and reprocessed by the Party into the Mass Line, which was presented as the unmediated experience of the masses. Disagreements within the movement are “resolved by the method of criticism and self-criticism” (Mao, *On Contradiction*). In practice this meant denunciation and self-denunciation. During the

Cultural Revolution, different Maoist factions began denouncing each other as “objectively counter-revolutionary,” as part of a competition for resources. Elements of both of these approaches can be seen in the actions of IPs, the former as an insistence on leadership by members of a particular group (Black, women, etc), the latter in the distribution of prestige to allies based on conspicuous self-abasement and political performance.

Ultimately, denunciation, exclusion, border-policing, promoting us/them binaries among the oppressed, and harping on principal contradictions are the methods through which IPs/Maoists mould autonomy into political power. Anarchism is a threat to Maoism, not because it denies oppression or comes from privileged groups, but because it carries the self-expression of the oppressed further.

References to liberation, autonomy, decolonisation, and so on notwithstanding, in such perspectives, liberation necessarily means *liberation of a spectre*, not of concrete people – not even of concrete people categorised by a spectre (as women, Black people, POC, etc). By implication, leadership or authoritarian rule by a member of the spectre is unproblematic. It is still *self-determination by the spectre* – the spectre itself remains *autonomous*, even if its members do not. This is clear in Ribeiro's essay *Senzala or Quilombo*: “[the quilombo] was no communist society” but had a king; “this is neither here nor [there]... [it had] freedom and



self-determination.” It does not matter if an autonomous zone is hierarchically structured, as long as the leaders are POC.

To enforce this primacy of the spectre, IPs encourage massive simplifications, reproducing the wider equivalence between stereotypes and roles (Vaneigem, 134). Members of entire groups (white, male, straight, middle-class) are deemed *privileged*. Privilege is often alleged despite being a result of the actions of a third party (the police, for example), rather than one’s own. But it carries implications that the privileged individual is somehow a direct oppressor of the oppressed individual (Kill Whitey, in *True Colors*, refers to “white people” as the oppressor), that they are part of a small, isolated elite (Ervin, 309), and that they’ve “got it good” in an absolute sense (Anon, Open Letter). Strategically, the focus is on the privileged person, rather than the person who actually discriminates against or oppresses the oppressed person. Such a person is to admit, identify with, unlearn, or give up their privilege, as if it were an attribute they controlled, rather than an attribute of a spectre, assigned and reinforced by others.

In terms of political strategy, IPs declare that people should do what the Expert defines as structurally responsible, *rather than following their desires*. This encourages people to focus on their weaknesses or internal conditioning, rather than their strengths or outer struggles (Gelderloos), situating oppression mainly in individual activists’ psyches rather than the dominant social system. IPs insist movements must have leaders, and these leaders must come from the oppressed group (Dot Matrix, CWS; Ervin, 291). Spaces must implement extensive policies of normative regulation and enclosure to meet criteria of safe space, reflecting a “need for protection and security that eclipses the desire for freedom” (Landstreicher, 12). Any refusal to do so is taken to be an instance of racism/sexism within the radical movement – an instance which is tied to occasional cases of insensitive or prejudiced comments or actions to paint a misleading picture of a radical scene in which oppressive behaviour is pervasive and out of control. Normative policing through safe space policies often makes spaces *less* safe, by creating risks of denunciation

and purging which are greater than the risks of micro-oppression (Anonymous Refused). Mixed movements are labelled not as *incidentally* white/male, but as *deliberately* white supremacist and patriarchal. The illusion is that exclusion creates inclusion; this rests on the implication that the power to exclude is unproblematic, provided it is vested in or exercised by the in-group. For anarchists, the best way to help people feel safer is to recreate autonomous forms of self-organized control over the basic economic and social conditions of life, and

for anarchists, the best way to help people feel safer is to recreate autonomous forms of self-organized control over the basic economic and social conditions of life, and to provide care and support within networks of affinity

to provide care and support within networks of affinity. Without roots in material scarcity, spectres would lose their power to wound.

To create a politics of sacrifice, people have to be taught they have no inherent value, so they believe in and support the systems of compensation associated with roles (Vaneigem, 139). IPs convey this message by defining privilege as an ineliminable attribute of identity and encouraging guilt. Experiences of different groups – separated by social categories – are taken to be incommensurable and incomparable, whereas those of individuals in the same group are taken to be equivalent or identical: incidents of alleged anarchist racism are likened to slavery and genocide, but instances of police brutality against black people and white protesters are absolutely incomparable (Ribeiro). Objecting to IPs’ abuse is “entitlement,” which is always a bad thing, since privileged people need to “know their place” as docile subordinates

of the new rulers-to-be. In some cases they are also expected to funnel resources to IPs' groups, without anything in return, all the while respecting the group's "autonomy" to bad-mouth and exclude them (Ervin, 291; Qilombo).

Despite their rhetorical radicalism, IPs, like all good Maoists, do not challenge capitalism. On the contrary, Perlman argues that national liberation movements – the inspiration for IPs – are actually means of capitalist nation-building. *Why is a supermarket packer not a manager, or a security guard not the chief of police? Because of racism.* "There's no earthly reason for the

to be anti-Eurocentric and anti-ethnocidal requires a rejection of the state

descendants of the persecuted to remain persecuted when nationalism offers them the prospect of becoming persecutors" (Perlman). The point, however, is that they become persecutors and not free beings. The overall system remains intact, dominant, with the spectres reshuffled.

Between anarchy and identity politics

THERE IS A COMMON MISUNDERSTANDING, going back to Marx's critique of Stirner and exhibited in Roger White's critique of Lawrence Jarach, that anarchists believe that spectres are simply figments of the imagination – "pretending [racist/sexist] discourse doesn't exist just because you didn't create it" (White). This means we can wish away spectres. *Stop believing in them, and they lose any power to oppress.* This is a mischaracterisation. While it is true that Stirner believes that spectres lose their *normative* force when we disbelieve them, we can also be oppressed by other people who continue to believe in and act on spectres. Structural oppressions are sociologically real but are not material in the Marxist sense. This simply means that one's own will is pitted against the wills and beliefs of others – most of whom continue to be possessed by spectres.

For anarchists such as Stirner, normative thought, or statism, is a deeper structure of oppression which generates the various other axes. Binary thinking is itself closely tied to European thought and the underpinnings of patriarchy and colonisation. Eurocentric statism and capitalism are bound-up with colonialism, modern thought, rationalism, and the modern world-system, but at a deeper level, Europe was also *self-colonised first* (Clastres, Perlman). While European countries became the global imperial powers, the problem of imperialism and ethnocide are inherent to *all states* (Clastres). The irony is that IPs are in fact Eurocentric, relying on European concepts such as rights and strong binary oppositions (Aragorn!, *Non-European Anarchism*, 10). On a deeper level, to be anti-Eurocentric and anti-ethnocidal requires a rejection of the state.

With their inversions of binaries, IPs seek to reproduce institutions of hierarchical power. The alternative here is affinity: the attempt to form connections, informal groups, and unions of egoists without these groups being mediated by spectres. Creating *unmediated intercourse* across socially operative hierarchies (race, gender, etc) is complicated, but by no means impossible – nor necessarily more difficult than creating unmediated intercourse between members of the same category. Where radicalism works well, it manages to construct such direct connections. As Landstreicher argues, "[t]he awareness each has of the others' individuality creates a basis where decision and action need not be separate" (21). Relating to others as unique beings, as non-disposable creatures valuable in themselves, makes possible communication *even in contexts of radical difference*. Anarchic affinity is undermined by the inability to challenge others' views, the construction of oppressed people as Experts, and the idea of incommensurability (Dot Matrix, CWS). This actually reinforces binary thinking and relations of domination.

IPs start from a standpoint within the dominant system of spectres, and encourage us to identify with our position within systems of oppression (Gelderloos, 13). They require that "any person interested in radical transformation relinquish the ability to define her/himself" (Jarach, 5). Instead, people are to

dissolve themselves into the pre-existing social categories into which they are classified, both by the dominant system and by IPs. As Jarach argues, “they can’t conceive of the possibility that the elevation of any particular culturally constructed marker into a significant value-laden category could lead to oppression” (3). Indeed, they define the possibility out of existence: we really *are* our categories; to oppress is to oppress a category; to liberate is to liberate a category. And leadership of Experts is necessary, if the extensional set are to be reduced to the spectre.

From a Stirnerian point of view, instead of starting from a subject-position assigned by the regime of spectres and categories, anarchists should start from a standpoint of being a unique individual irreducible to any spectre or category (*including* those of uniqueness and individuality). A Stirnerian recognises racism or sexism, not as one’s own privilege separating one from the other, but as *an act of normative repression against other unique ones, and an insult against one’s own uniqueness*. The intensity of internal and external barriers to free expression vary with context, but there is a basis for networking together in the rejection of alienation and spectres. This is recognised from non-Eurocentric perspectives; some indigenous scholars argue that modern alienation is a kind of sickness, *afflicting colonisers as well as colonised* – indeed, that the colonisers infected the colonised *because they were already sick* (Duran and Duran, Burman). This position meshes with the Stirnerian view that oppressor as well as oppressed is possessed by spectres.

Anarchy does not necessarily stem from any identity at all. More often, it comes from a standpoint outside the field of available identities – as in Stirner’s idea of a standpoint unique to each person (190-1). Gelderloos argues that his own experience is that “[a]ll the identities that society tried to stitch me into don’t fit, and the fabric is coarse” (6), offering “an inheritance stripped of anything I value” (7). Similarly, for another anonymous anarchist, “Our task is not to give up some phantom privilege that has never really been our own, but to expose and move beyond the artificial identities that smother our individuality” (Willful Disobedience).



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Rather than expressing white male privilege, anarchy should be seen as a form of *ethnogenesis*: the emergence of a subculture or counterculture which, if able to continue on its line of flight (or *détournement*), would become a different culture entirely (New Travellers and, historically, Irish Travellers are good examples). The emergence of new cultures through ethnogenesis is well-documented, and often stems from flight from state power (Scott), a process which begins with a choice to differ from the majority of an existing group. In other words, forming a counterculture is the first step in becoming non-white. Ethnogenesis is a problem for essentialists because it entails fluidity in the very formation of the structural basis; it frustrates border-policing. IPs denounce both dropping-out and cultural hybridity, dismissing the latter as cultural appropriation.

The Politics of Affect

If oppression is the imposition of a *structure* in which people are assigned to spectres – of which both privileged and oppressed spectre are largely effects – then IPs actually *entrench*



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oppression by locking-in the spectres and intensifying normativity. If one assumes that hierarchical power is wrong *because it prevents (non-white) people from living joyously, in the flow of becoming of their own desires*, then the subordination of autonomy to the primary contradiction is not an appropriate response. Anarchy goes further, because it opposes the underlying structure of domination of unique ones and flows of becoming by the order of spectres. IPs seek to abolish the privilege of a particular spectre; ideally, anarchists seek to abolish the normative power of spectres in general – which necessarily also abolishes every spectre’s privilege. Stirnerian anarchy goes beyond unlearning privilege — the favouring of one spectre over another — to *unlearning spectres* — learning not to be subordinate to spectres.

Affectively, the orientation of anarchy is to unmediated, active joy. There is a level of immediate, free becoming which is deeper than the hierarchy of spectres. Stirner theorises a kind of intense, joyous exercise of capacities “without reservations” (171), giving “free play” to one’s capabilities (167), and playing “as freely as possible” (130). Bonanno argues that capitalism denies us an experience of active (rather than passive) joy, and counsels a “search for joy... through the search for play,” driven by a “vital impulse that is always new, always in movement.” In the excitement of play “lies the possibility to break with the old world and identify with new aims and other values and needs” (15-16). Hakim Bey argues that insurrections and autonomous zones should create peak experiences of extraordinary consciousness and intensity (TAZ). Such peak experiences

are “value-formative on the individual level,” allowing a “transformation of everyday life” (*Occult Assault*). Various anarchist practices, from the TAZ to rewilding, from joyous insurrectionary struggle to dropping-out and living differently, are means of recovering this level of becoming and immediacy.

In contrast, the dominant affects for IPs are wallowing in the loss of immediacy and the inevitability of alienation (guilt, melancholy, inadequacy), a kind of joyless anger. They reproduce a style of politics which focuses on telling people “how to behave” (Dot Matrix, CWS), conditioning people into roles which reproduce the power of the spectacle. IPs reproduce conventional morality and its structures of *ressentiment* — negative affect (often including irrational, even self-destructive, verbal or physical lashing out) towards others as an expression of one’s own powerlessness, in contrast to celebration of one’s power. *I have lost my capacity to enjoy; you have stolen it; you must be punished.* On the side of the supposedly empowered, Ervin encourages ruthlessness and “cold-blooded efficiency” as key virtues (245), reproducing the affective structure of managers, soldiers, and police. The practice of calling-out frames whiteness, white supremacy, and patriarchy as *personal* moral failures, even though the underlying theory frames them as *structural* realities. The cultivation of individual guilt and blame actually reproduces dominant Calvinist normativity (Gelderloos, 13), and the development of elaborate group norms reinforces white middle-class status orientations and etiquette.

For IPs, neither (those assigned as) privileged nor oppressed are able to escape *ressentiment* and become empowered. The latter become angry, rigid, and dependent on the spectre for their sense of power; the former become docile, submissive, and incapable of autonomous action. With intense joy forbidden, people become vulnerable to the mundane manipulation of transitory pleasure and prestige. IPs create a “system of rewards... to encourage compliance” with leaders from marginalised

groups (Gelderloos, 12), reflecting the broader dynamic by which “skill in playing and handling roles determines rank in the spectacular hierarchy” (Vaneigem, 131). For the former out-group, anger and frustration with the dominant system are channelled onto other radicals, which sustains continued submersion in systems of oppression by providing a safety-valve for frustration, creating a substitute for a less reliable substantive rebellion. It also renders the oppressed dependent on the oppressors as either docile allies or targets of anger, and often leads to a politics focused on demands for recognition from those one also seeks autonomy from. The binary nature of the

if they want dense, mutually supportive, socially meaningful communities, then they — like the rest of us — will have to *build* these communities, often from scratch, on the basis of affinity and living-otherwise

spectres adopted by IPs preclude ever becoming autonomous from the supposed oppressor, whom they paradoxically *need* to remain in place in order to ground their own role as Experts. Hence the irony when Ribeiro says of APOC “it is not about white people at all” — at the end of an entire article which is *all about white people*.

The structure of impotent anger, displaced aggression, and policing of etiquette is most notable in the practice of *calling-out* or denouncing other radicals — either for micro-oppressions (small comments or actions which are insensitive or latently racist/sexist), or for political disagreement categorised as racist/sexist. For instance, the CrimethInc disruptors call for a “culture of calling people out

on their shit" (Anon, Smack a White Boy Part Two). In general, calling-out involves a crude, aggressive style; it carries a tone of *I get to tell you what to do, and you have to obey*.

Negative effects of anti-oppression normativity are paradoxically felt most strongly by the oppressed – poor whites, Black people, young people, people with psychological problems, and newcomers to a movement – who are less accustomed to self-policing their social appearance, less able to do so, or less aware of the operative norms. IPs thus close down radical groups into tightly bordered sects. Gelderloos deems the emphasis on micro-oppressions a kind of purism which seeks to banish deviance so as to create a monolithic personality-type (18). In practice, what is being challenged is not

suitable aftercare, leads to guilt, despair, and apathy. Alternatives to calling-out include rational debate, parody, ignoring provocations, trying to channel anger onto the wider system, and discussing the incident one-to-one outside the conflictual setting – also known as "calling-in." Some anarchists advocate using nonviolent communication in such contexts (Heckert). In classical indigenous cultures, harmful deviance is taken as a kind of imbalance or sickness. They would seek to understand how a person has come into imbalance, and to gently guide them back to the right path (which is also the flourishing or becoming of their own personality). Most anarchists are very reasonable if they are told *precisely* why something is problematic.

anarchy seems irrelevant to the community because most people who've been conditioned to live within such system-constructed communities have internalized repressive, statist beliefs, and accept capitalist common sense

IPs tend to react aggressively to any response to being called-out which does not amount to unconditional apology. Usually, the responses are not inherently objectionable. They deploy strategies of argumentative rebuttal, mitigation by context or motive, etc, which are standard in many conversational contexts. It is never entirely clear why these predictable responses are deemed intolerable by IPs (the claim that they seem to deny the other's

the person's degree of complicity in regimes of oppression, but the extent of their knowledge of the appropriate anti-oppressive terminology and related normative codes.

Conceived as a struggle against the enactment of structural oppression, calling-out confuses the individual with the spectre they are taken to represent. It is understandable that oppressed people have a low tolerance threshold for prejudice and insensitivity, but it is unhelpful to glorify and encourage such reactions as politically valuable. Aragorn! says that "I tend only to 'criticize' when I am willing to take responsibility for the caring of the criticized" (*Toward a Non-European Anarchism*, 6). This position is more attentive to the affective consequences of calling-out, which, without

perspective [Tekanji] seems spurious), but it seems to be because they entail the absence of the desired affective response of submission.

Landstreicher suggests that IPs turns us into "a bunch of shy, yet inquisitorial mice tip-toeing around each other for fear of being judged, and just as incapable of attacking the foundations of this society as they are of relating to each other" (16). Instead, he urges us to become "a certain sort of being... capable of acting on our own terms to realize our own desires and dreams," in struggle against domination (3). The point is "to transform ourselves into strong, daring, self-willed, passionate rebels" (6). This strength and passion is impeded by affects such as guilt, pity, and regret. We are aiming, remember, for a state of full life *without reservations*.



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IPs conceive of their angry, disruptive style of politics as a way to express the authentic experience of being traumatised. But their distribution of commensurability (absolute *within* a spectre, but utterly absent *outside* it) entails downplaying the degree of specific traumas suffered by concrete people. And while it is true that listening to and believing a survivor's story is crucial to healing, the sources and symptoms of trauma are too diverse to be dealt with through homogenised identities and prescriptive restrictions. Furthermore, the tactics of calling-out and excluding deviants can themselves be traumatic or triggering.

IPs often turn trauma into a source of power and identity, but marking trauma as an identity is also a barrier to autonomy. It prevents us reaching the level of immediacy and joy, keeping us in a field of scarcity thinking. It's no coincidence that the most extreme regimes of oppression (such as Gitmo, supermax segregation, concentration camps, Native residential schools, and the "seasoning" of slaves) are *designed* to cause as much post-traumatic stress as possible. Trauma is also a block on active becoming and on living life to the fullest. In indigenous cultures, it is conceived as a sickness of the soul, in which part of the self retreats from the world or loses its life-energy (Burman; Duran and Duran).

Being open to people *as unique individuals* is the best way to respond to these kinds of problems. The fact that someone else has needs incompatible with one's own, or that they can't

guess in advance what common action or object might be personally unbearable, *does not mean they are oppressing someone*.

Exodus versus submersion

One of the biggest disagreements between Stirnerian anarchists and IPs is on the question of exodus. IPs (and most left anarchists) generally condemn exodus as a privileged, middle-class strategy, instead favouring submersion in existing communities of the oppressed. For instance, the APOC disruptors claim that CrimethInc "encourage the culture of dropping out of society, which makes the assumption that the reader/attendee has that privilege" (Anon, Smack a White Boy Part Two). An anonymous Qilombo supporter terms the anarchist scene a "subcultural playpen" and an "all-white fantasy world" (comments on Jarach et al). Kill Whitey labels dumpster-diving as privileged, condemning "white college kids and middle-class punks hiding in drop-out culture" (Kill Whitey, *Food Not Bombs*), while Ervin classifies criticism of the "state's ability to hold back a free lifestyle" as middle class (110). IPs allege that the entire tactical repertoire of horizontalism is privileged, in contrast with their preferred focus on community organising or intra-movement struggle.

The grain of truth in this position is that tactics of escape, exodus, and physical resistance carry different levels of difficulty and risk for different people. It's easier to quit a job than



to escape from prison. It's easier to run from the police if one is physically fit. But anyone can adopt a *perspective* of escape, and *attempt* to create lines of flight from the system. While it may be easier for some than others, nobody should be under a moral obligation to remain oppressed just to avoid being different from others; any such obligation only reinforces oppression.

There are far more people who squat, shop-lift, or dumpster dive who are from poor and marginal backgrounds; in the global South there are entire strata living in squatted shantytowns, abstracting electricity, and scavenging in rubbish tips. Historical practices such as the celebrated *quilombos* show that dropping-out is a serious, and often successful, strategy for the most oppressed. James Scott's work shows that peasants, slaves, and marginal groups use various tactics of exodus to minimise their subservience to elite power. Similarly, when highly oppressed groups become sufficiently angry, they often use the most militant forms of protest – as we have seen in cases like Paris 2005, London 2011, Los Angeles 1992, and so on. Poor people also use all kinds of high-risk survival strategies, from undocumented border-crossing to involvement in the drug trade. There is also evidence that dropping-out *worked* to defeat aspects of capitalism in the 1970s (Shukaitis).

Why, then, do IPs oppose exodus? I would hazard a guess that the real underlying objection is not that poor people *cannot* drop out, but that they *should not*: dropping-out contradicts the IP's political agenda, resting on strong spectres and identities *within* the existing frame. Structural determinism precludes escape on principle. IPs celebrate their current blockages, internalise their cage, and insist that the cage is both inescapable *and* revolutionary. This is not a perspective of escape — it is a perspective of entrapment in the guise of solidarity.

IPs' emphasis on community really comes down to a fear of *placelessness*. Their ideological vision of society requires that everyone have definable positionalities: a conservative vision, but inverted. This requires that categories remain dominant over lines of flight, escape,

and becoming. Hence the need to enforce a prohibition on exodus – a prohibition which reveals their similarities with states and other hierarchical systems, which similarly prohibit the withdrawal of participation and restrict mobility. It is easy to see how the fear of the uncontrollable and unknowable – and the parallel desire to order all of reality into a fixed schema – lies beneath these discursive strategies.

A lot of the objection to exodus comes down to a hatred of *play*. Drop-outs are accused of turning poverty into a *game*, of saying someone can be poor and *have fun* (Anon, Smack and White Boy Part Two). This may just as well

with intense joy forbidden, people become vulnerable to the mundane manipulation of transitory pleasure and prestige

be said of important strands of peasant resistance such as carnivalesque and folk culture. IPs flourish on a culture of deadly seriousness and urgency, tied up with a celebration of trauma. *Real* activism, after all, is hard work, sacrifice: *I can't have fun, so you shouldn't either*. This entails denying pleasure to others whenever possible. Of course, dropping out does lead to a kind of privilege – the person who has escaped clearly has a better life than the person still trapped in the system. This is equally true of *quilombos*, maroon communities, pirate utopias, and so on. But is this really a case against dropping-out?

Common sense and the community

INSTEAD OF SEEKING TO ESCAPE THE SYSTEM, IPs place great emphasis on serving the *community*, the *people*, the *oppressed*, or a particular oppressed group. Ervin insists that

the usefulness of revolutionaries depends on whether they serve the community (136), as opposed to "Déclassé punks with red Mohawks" (276). White suggests that the "first priority of resistance" is community consciousness raising. Ribeiro argues that the "people" are failing to flock to existing anarchist groups because they represent "a white, petty-bourgeois Anarchism that cannot relate to the people," an anarchism which is "individualistic, self-serv-

let us start always from joy, share it with others when we can, and use it as a weapon to break down common sense, to rebuild and redefine community, to replace the graveyard of spectres with a world of life

ing, [and] selfish." A Qilombo supporter goes as far as to argue that "involving oneself in the school system" is an "excellent... investment," far superior to drop-out anarchism, while another posits a "need to emphasize community norms and practices" (Kurukshetra), and Veranasi tells anarchists to get a job so as not to separate from the oppressed (comments on Smack a White Boy Part Two). There is also a wider accusation, particularly in Ervin's work, that the allegedly bad race, gender, or class politics of radical movements is the reason for their continued failure (303, 310). This is the Maoist view that a tide of latent energy is always waiting to be released, which is currently fettered by the principal contradiction and inadequate leadership (Mao, *On Contradiction*; Bouc, 137; Howe and Walker, 176; Gurley).

A collective proprietary attitude to geographical areas corresponds to this political bias. White anarchists active in poor communities are accused of failing to get community consent, disrespecting locals, and gentrifying areas by inserting whiteness (Kill Whitey, *Smack a White*

Boy; Kurukshetra). Ervin suggests anarchists have no "right to be" in a Black area (282), Kill Whitey tells white radicals to "get the fuck out of POC communities" (*True Colors*); in effect, white radicals are banned from Black areas in an inverted reproduction of segregation. This is a double-bind, since anarchist events in rural locations are declared inaccessible to poor people (Ervin, *Racism in ABC*; Veranasi, comments on Smack a White Boy Part Two). This reflects a broader irresolvable predicament: radicals are both told to be part of the people, and told they cannot (since their perspective is incommensurable and their privilege is ineliminable). The glorification of ghettos as autonomous zones runs up against the reality of imposed racial segregation.

There is a strong tone of *ressentiment* in the position: *I can't drop out so you mustn't*. If I was jailed and unable to escape from power, I would take courage and hope from the fact that others are still able to do so. The objection to separation tries to force radicals back into avoidable systems of authoritarian domination, such as work and schooling, thus reinforcing these institutions. IPs glorify escape from controlled spaces, such as fleeing the *senzala* (slave quarters) to the *quilombo* (autonomous zone). Yet in practice, they tell us never to flee the *senzala*, but instead to work within it as overseers, conditioning children into conformity, or as exploited, joyless workers. There is nothing radical and empowering about getting a job. In a context of generalised entrapment, to separate is not to alienate, but rather to escape, to slip out of place, to flee dominant categories and those who impose them.

Community politics is hamstrung by a major problem: the community are not especially radical. The IP assumption that "the people" or "the community" has revolutionary instincts is an effect of its construction as a spectre, not a result of observation of actual people. It also embeds vanguardist assumptions that the role of radicals is to locate, lead, and imbue these communities with revolutionary interests. The orientation to liberate a spectre rather than concrete people is the source of IPs' hostility to individualism, personal freedom, and supposed selfishness among radicals.

IPs also run up against the realities of contemporary capitalism. Today, most of us do not belong to real, substantive communities. As Landstreicher argues, “the dominant forms of relating are economic, based on the domination of survival over life... Today, neither the daily interactions of one’s ‘communities’ (these strange, disconnected ‘communities’ of family, school, work) nor the chance encounters (at the market, on the bus, at some public event) have much chance of sparking a real and intense interest in another, an impassioned curiosity to discover who they are and what we might be able to create with them” (7). Bey argues that simply coming together is already a victory over capitalism (*Immediatism vs Capitalism*), and the Situationists exposed the emptiness of everyday life and the role of urban residential areas as state-controlled warehouses for workers (Debord, sections 169-76). Even where some kind of community life persists, it rarely entails a unitary set of beliefs, demands, and interests, or even (outside of certain subaltern social movements and indigenous groups) any kind of collective power. In looking to “the community,” IPs are seeking a source of strength which is at once a product of the system, and thereby constituted as weak. If they want dense, mutually supportive, socially meaningful communities, then they – like the rest of us – will have to *build* these communities, often from scratch, on the basis of affinity and living-otherwise. When IPs speak for the community, they typically do so as a vanguard, a representative, who substitutes for a community which is absent in practice.

A short time ago, the new BBC class survey (Heyden) became a fad among those activists who use social media. Nearly everyone who completed it came out in a category called “emergent service workers” (ESWs). The survey has eight categories, and ESWs are the second-bottom category, defined by low income and precarious work. They differ from the worse-off precariat in only two ways – “social and cultural capital.” In other words, the average anarchist is in the same position as the poorest group, except that we have more education and stronger social networks. ESWs

are not some middle-class elite, hovering over the authentic poor. The precariat make up only 15% of the population according to the survey. ESWs are well below halfway. And the moment a precarian becomes politicised, they tend to gain education and networks, and become ESWs. So, realistically, anarchy is not a movement of middle-class kids. It is a movement of politically conscious, socially networked poor people.

IPs believe that anarchy is irrelevant to the community because anarchists are privileged, and separate from the community. In fact, anarchy seems irrelevant to the community because most people who’ve been conditioned to live within such system-constructed communities have internalised repressive, statist beliefs, and accept capitalist common sense (the Gramscian notion of an incoherent everyday philosophy or ideology prevalent among

the strength and passion [of rebellion] is impeded by affects such as guilt, pity, and regret; we are aiming, remember, for a state of full life without reservations

subaltern people, which embeds uncritical, hegemonic, and reactionary beliefs). The idea that the oppressed are just waiting for the right activist leadership, which is blocked by the allegedly inherent racism/sexism in social movements, is a delusion. Working in wider communities entails putting up with (and even glorifying) a lot of common-sense ideologies, prejudices, and bigotry on a scale far greater than anything within radical scenes. The real problem is not organisation, or the correct line, or the right leadership. The problem is whether people actually *desire* revolution/insurrection. In fact, no revolutionary “people” exists, because of what Stirner terms the *police sentiments* of actually existing people (116).

The hypothesis that the community is more radical than so-called privileged anarchists is simply false. Most anarchists already oppose work, police, prisons, government, and so on – whereas most community members do not. It is not uncommon for anarchists fighting gentrification, CCTV and other forms of the surveillance state, or morality-policing to be pitted against other local residents. It might be in poor people's material interests to oppose dominant institutions, but for the most part they don't. People who lack formal or informal political education tend not to become anarchists – because they tend to remain stuck in capitalist common sense, dependent on the discourses made available by the mainstream, and caught up in the pursuit of values of individual advancement. Their supposed interests have little effect in mitigating these influences. Any anarchist

the idea that the oppressed are just waiting for the right activist leadership, which is blocked by the allegedly inherent racism/sexism in social movements, is a delusion

project directed at the worse-off needs to start from some kind of political education or political de/resocialisation of the poor (not primarily of ourselves, though most critical pedagogy is also reflexive and dialogical). Otherwise, anarchists pursuing such projects will simply be overwhelmed by the unreflexive common sense of those whose perspectives they idealise.

The theme of *urgency* is closely connected to the community orientation. IPs often posit immediately apparent realities, which are deemed extra-theoretical and extra-political. Disagreement with the IP's perspective or actions is belittled as a "topic ripe for a drunk PhD" (White) or "some intellectual's grad thesis" (Weaver). The oppressed are said to "know oppression" from experience: "we lost the need to understand pain philosophically when we learned it physically" (Ribeiro). Ervin postures

as having no particular expertise, except "a decent supply of good common sense and street knowledge" (10), and urges us to "trust the best instincts of the people" (119). Patriarchy Haters condemn political debate as contrasting with real, life-or-death stakes for them: "We do not agree with people having a 'political argument' at our expense" (*Statement*). They suggest that their positions come from their "BODIES," which are not "to be politicized, theorized, speculated upon" (Weaver).

IPs advance a framework in which theory distracts from reality. The historical origin of this framework is the Maoist emphasis on "experience" (suitably processed by the party) as superior to "book learning," and the corresponding "Red versus expert" struggles of the Cultural Revolution. The basic gesture is to split issues between the *real reality* posited by

IPs and associated with experience and the principal contradiction, and a field deemed secondary or tertiary, and therefore trivial.

This grounds apparently obvious, self-evident claims and is used to create a sense of urgency: IPs are doing real, life-or-death politics, and everyone else is just messing around (notice once again the prejudice against play).

The function of this gesture is to "declare certain questions off-limits" because "the answer is already known" (Williams). Arguments against IPs' claims are often displaced onto the issue of *who has the right to decide*, which is returned to the question of spectres – Black radicals don't have to listen to white critics, male experts have no right to expound on survivors' experiences, etc. This is a category-error, to which the appropriate answer is: *I've not exposed your mistake because I think you need my permission – I've exposed your mistake because it leads to oppression, bad politics, or ineffectiveness*. This strategy gives power to those who define which issues are urgent. In fact, none of the cases discussed here were anywhere near to being life-or-death situations. And paradoxically, to heal from trauma, one *needs* to theorise and intellectualise it.

In fact, the idea of obvious experiences is fallacious. There is no simple divide between reality/experience and thought/theory. Humans process experiences through conceptual categories, and in many cases, these categories affect the impact of an experience – or what,

subjectively, is experienced. People don't lack theories simply because they are not formally educated or academically trained. Rather, everyone has their own stock of theories and concepts through which they unconsciously process the world, and without which the world would simply be an incomprehensible mess of sense-impressions. Whenever somebody claims that their own conceptions are *real*, or are unmediated *experience* in contrast to others' mere ideas or opinions, they are actually reifying and naturalising their own socially constructed beliefs – usually beliefs based on capitalist common sense. There is no such thing as direct, unmediated knowledge from experience (as distinct from unmediated experience, which is *felt as unrepresentable*). In any case, IPs create a regime of roles, which in Vaneigem's terms, "express lived experience, yet at the same time they reify it" (131).

This does not mean that academic theories are always best. Academic thought is often tied-up with corporate and state power (Dot Matrix, Science As Capital). Everyday, local knowledges can also be effective ways of theorising the world. But it is a mistake to reify them into unmediated experiences which are somehow directly (and therefore more objectively) true. It shuts down dialogue and reinforces the enclosure of common sense. And in many cases, everyday common sense is also extremely oppressive, accepting and imposing normativities complicit with, and directly reinforcing, institutionalized forms of power. In addition, many key terms in IPs' discourse – structural oppression, privilege, patriarchy, trauma, framing, supremacy, *senzala*, *quilombo* and so on – are not everyday common sense terms, but imports from university cultural studies texts or historical reading. Anti-intellectualism handily insulates IPs from rebuttal, but does not make their poorly based strategies any more effective.

For a World Without Spectres!

FROM ALL OF THIS, WE MUST CONCLUDE THAT IPs are just another type of leftist, promoting sacrifice and renunciation, posing as liberators

of the oppressed. IPs are seductive in the ways they have of identifying and channelling the anger of the oppressed, the guilt of the (relatively) privileged, experiences of trauma, and awareness of the possibility of unintended oppression. But they channel these affects into political power, using them to entrench the role of IPs as Experts. This role requires that privilege/oppression be theorised as an ineliminable original sin.

Against this prevalent form of disguised vanguardism, let us hold forth the beacon of a *world without spectres*. Structural oppressions are sociologically real, but their roots can be

everyday common sense is also extremely oppressive, accepting and imposing normativities complicit with, and directly reinforcing, institutionalized forms of power

traced deeper, to the structures of statism and representation. If we must theorise a primary contradiction, then let it be the contradiction between ourselves – as unique ones, forces of becoming, irreducible and unrepresentable beings – and the entire regime of spectres and alienation. Let us dispense with boundary policing, and instead nurture affinities *across* social categories. It is in rediscovering the level of immanent, abundant becoming, the joy of life, the flow of desire and direct connection, that we destroy the power which spectres exercise over us. Let us start always from this joy, share it with others when we can, and use it as a weapon to break down common sense, to rebuild and redefine community, to replace the graveyard of spectres with a world of life. May the alien privileges of spectres and the alien oppressions they engender never come between a unique one, a free being, and its immanent becoming. (A)

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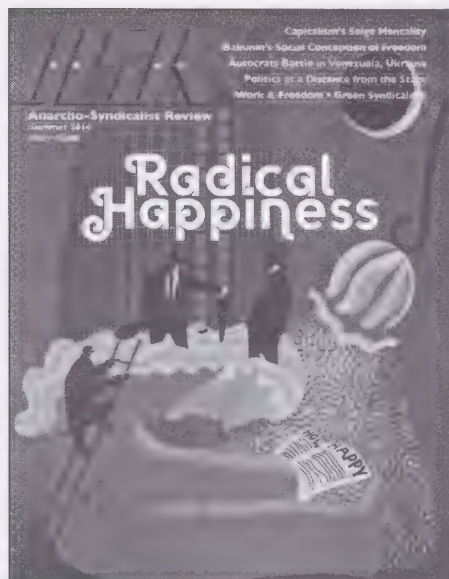
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Media Reviews

Reviews by Lawrence Jarach

Anarchy does exchanges with anarchist and anti-state, anti-capitalist periodicals.

We try to review all such periodicals received, so send them to us.



ASR

(Anarcho-Syndicalist Review)

PO Box 42531

Philadelphia PA 19101

Issue #62 (Summer 2014), \$5.00

“**R**ADICAL HAPPINESS,” ANNOUNCES the cover, and Brian Martin’s essay of the same name brings readers into six pages of text with two – count them: two! – graphics. Well, one doesn’t actually count since it’s an edited black and white version of the color cover graphic, in keeping with the typically dreary layout of ASR. I’m not sure what counts as “radical” in this piece that could have been written for an introductory course in Sociology or Psychology at a community college (or even better, the California Institute for Integral Studies – see footnote #2 of my review of *Thank You, Anarchy*, elsewhere in this issue). It’s

not that Martin doesn’t have some good ideas on how to be a happier person, it’s just that his observations, culled from a plethora of distinctly mainstream sources (including public policy textbooks), are mundane. Fourteen goals (?) for helping to achieve happiness are enumerated, with astoundingly unradical (even for a syndicalist) observations: express gratitude; be optimistic; reduce overthinking; minimize social comparison; help others; maintain and build social relationships; cope with adversity; forgive; experience flow (aka “being in the zone”); be mindful; pursue meaningful goals; cultivate religiousness or spirituality (this is perhaps the most inexplicable – I’d always thought of syndies as being rather materialist); savor experiences (I interpret this to mean a general deceleration); and exercise. It’s difficult to keep from snickering. Martin’s conclusion is priceless: “Largely left off the agenda is a radical interpretation of the findings [!], as indicating goals for social change and methods for pursuing it. Most of the findings are entirely compatible with anarchist principles of self-management...” They are compatible because they are vague to the point of banality. In fact, the more cynical approach (mine) might entail listing the ways they are “entirely compatible” with a maintenance and extension of the status quo, as ways of distracting working class and poor people from seeking to alter the conditions and root causes (root meaning *radical* after all) of their alienation, anxiety, depression, generalized misery, and all the other woes that are inherent in (post)industrial capitalism.

What have we got to be thankful for? Shit wages that barely cover living expenses? Reduce thinking too much about actually effective strategies for “social change and methods for pursuing it” and having those strategies actually entail something like “anarchist principles” – and not just about the self-management of industry and the economy... The three separate entries about Bakunin on the centenary of his birth (one the reproduction of a letter the Old Man sent to another member of the International Alliance for Social Democracy concerning the infamous – and widely misunderstood – concept of the “invisible dictatorship”) are as bereft of graphics, but at least they share some specifics. Each issue is rounded out by the usual humorless economic ramblings of Jon Bekken and Iain McKay. There’s also a tendency of some of the regular writers to review each others’ books, a dubious way to publicize one’s work.

Black Seed:

A Green Anarchist Journal

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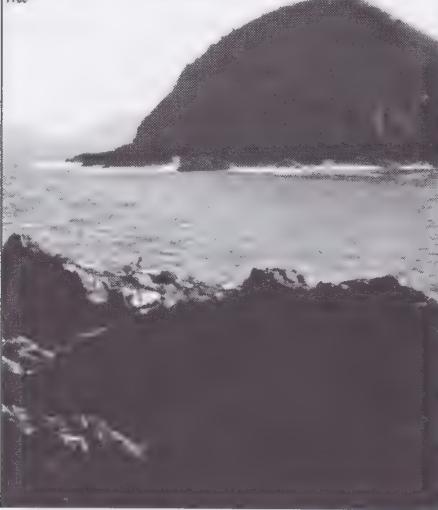
blackseed.anarchyplanet.org

#2 CONTAINS A COUPLE OF INTERESTING ruminations on anthropology, and since I got my degree in that field, it’s difficult not to feel an initial excitement at the possibilities of those discussions. My excitement quickly dissipated, however. The reprint of a ten-year old Kevin Tucker essay is a bit of a provocation, since he’s on record as hating

BLACK SEED

A GREEN ANARCHIST JOURNAL

Issue #2, Fall 2014
Free



Black Seed. KT's overview is marred by his inherent trust of "the work of radical anthropologists" in "cataloguing all the problems of civilization." From my studies (I graduated twenty years before Tucker wrote his essay, but still...) I can remember that the majority of my professors and the majority of the authors we read were not radical by any stretch of the imagination; anything radical needed to be imputed between the lines, or asked about during office hours (and even then, the results were disappointing to a fledgling anarchist). The overriding concern among academics is to get and stay on the tenure track, research conclusions be damned. This fundamental and inherent aspect of choosing an academic career path is why any self-respecting anarchist would be – at the very least – leery of any published work by academics. There are occasional exceptions of course, and when/if an actual radical academic publishes or says anything publicly that goes against the institutional parameters of a given college or university, you can be sure that their academic performance will come under review, if not microscopic scrutiny.

Censure or termination will probably not be too far behind. Given that kind of bureaucratic pressure, it's surprising that there could be anything that Tucker dares to call "radical anthropology"; there may be anthropology from which radicals can glean important information, but that's a different beast. What I got from my undergraduate studies – aside from the relevant data that human cultures have existed happily and steadily without the state or other institutions of hierarchy and domination for thousands of years – was an enduring critical analytical methodology. As I said in my contribution to *ajoda* #61 (2006; with three essays, an interview with Ted Kaczynski, and a column devoted to anthropology), "Having an education in anthropology... taught me how to read between the lines... how to find the prejudices and assumptions of authors and teachers. I was able to recognize the strength and durability of mythology, in academia as well as in radical politics." Tucker is engaged in precisely that mythological thinking if he still believes in the possibility of "radical anthropology." That said, Aragorn!'s "Answers to Questions Not Asked: Anarchists & Anthropology" left me somewhat perplexed, as I didn't see much discussion of anthropology at all. What little in it that directly discusses anthropology is relegated to an attack on the imposition of the cultural biases of anthropologists upon their "subjects," which is totally valid, if somewhat dated (the scenario of anthropologists as the recon troops of European colonialism is archaic, and most anthropologists recognize, reject, and disown its legacy of complicity in that project). It reminds me of an old Hasidic story about an atheist who comes to convince a renowned rebbe that god doesn't exist. After several hours of going over various proofs for the non-existence of god, the rebbe responds: "The god you don't believe in, I don't believe in either!" The anthropology Aragorn! rejects, I also reject.

Fifth Estate

PO Box 201016

Ferndale MI 48220

#393 (Spring 2015), \$4.00

THE COVER ANNOUNCES THAT THIS issue's theme is "Anti-Marx: Wherein the Spectre from the 19th Century gets pried by Fifth Estate writers." It's a little odd, then, that half the contributions are from the 1970s, and that those three (by Bookchin [as far as I know, never an *FE* writer], Werbe, and Zerzan) are by former Marxists. Ron Tabor's *The Tyranny of Theory: A Contribution to the Anarchist Critique of Marxism* is reviewed, but that book was written by



a former Marxist as well. Then there's an appreciation of Sylvia Federici's *Caliban and the Witch*, her critique of Marx for ignoring the role of women in the process of primitive accumulation, but having read her book and knowing a little about her, I can confidently say that Federici remains firmly within the Marxist tradition (autonomous though it may be). I recognize that deciding on a theme and hoping for strong contributions from good writers can be a challenge, but it is a bit frustrating to get excited by an issue presumably dedicated to countering the bad influence of Marx's

authoritarian and mystical ideas (and their real-world legacy through the near century-long ascendance of Leninism) and end up without significant criticisms from people whose ideas were not influenced by Marx or Marxism. As someone who never had or wanted a Marxist pedigree, it would have been far more pleasant and satisfying for me to read something looking into the philosophical failures of Marx as well as the failures of Marxism-in-practice from a life-long non-Marxist anarchist, rather than from critics who used to be *on the inside*, as it were.

Perhaps it's not a little ironic, then, that the lead-off article in this issue is "Syria's Kurdish Revolution: The Anarchist Element & the Challenge of Solidarity," by Bill Weinberg (a stalwart of leftist anarchism and part of the Institute for Anarchist Studies speakers' bureau). First there's the dizzying array of acronyms (PKK, PYD, YPJ, YPG, KRG, DAF, FSA, LCC, PJAK), all of which – with the exception of the quasi-Platformist Turkish DAF (Revolutionary Anarchist Action) – are obvious non-anarchist organizations. Indeed, the PKK has had an explicitly

Marxist-Leninist orientation dating from its founding in 1978 through the 2011 prison manifesto of the Great Leader Abdullah Öcalan announcing the new party line of Democratic Confederalism. This is some sort of amalgam of ideas supposedly containing the influence of the libertarian municipalism of Murray Bookchin – but that's the *post-anarchist* Bookchin, who made his break with anarchism public in 1999, the same year Öcalan was arrested and declared a unilateral ceasefire in the conflict with the Turkish state. Whatever influence anarchism might have on this recent ideological and practical reorientation of the PKK, it has little to do with Bookchin *the anarchist* (circa 1958-1995); even if it did, regular readers of this journal know how we and all of our post-left minions feel about Bookchin's pernicious influence and legacy on actual anarchism... In any case, the fact that this ideological shift didn't originate from the rank and file of the PKK or through the agitation of non-cadre to put pressure on and/or influence the Party leadership, but from within the organizational framework of a 30-year old Marxist-Leninist vanguardist party as a result of the Leader's personal decision should – at the very least – make anarchists pause. Regardless of how nifty it might sound, with something like horizontalism taking place on the ground, and with certain anarchists around the world scrambling to support the so-called Rojava Revolution, the fact remains that the actions of the PKK/YPG/YPJ/PYD rank and file and unaffiliated Kurds in the region are about as anarchist as those of the zapatistas in Chiapas or the *piquet-eros* of Buenos Aires. That is to say, their non-hierarchical organizational forms are recognizable as worthy of support and solidarity because anarchists recognize them as valuable forms regardless of the ideology behind them. However – and this is the tricky part for most anarchists who cannot tell the difference – a non-hierarchical form does not, and

A Journal for the Abolition of all forms of Enslavement

Modern Slavery

THE LIBERTARIAN CRITIQUE OF CIVILIZATION



ALL ILLUSTRATIONS REMAIN ON THE FOLD-OUT. reproduction paper by Mantis/Opus 2012

modernslavery.collector.org

Illegalism

Critical Self-Theory

The Life & Times of a Spanish Anarchist

The Situationists and May '68

The Greatness of my Ambition

Slavery and Slack, Part 2

Chomsky on Anarchism

Max Stirner on *Les Mystères*

\$12.95 / Number 3



- Paul Z. Simons
- Jason McQuinn
- Manolo Gonzalez
- Karen Goaman
- Wolf Landstreicher
- Joseph Winogrand
- Bob Black
- Lawrence Stepelevich

REVIEWS: Debt: the First 5,000 Years, Max Stirner, Desolonizing Anarchism

indeed cannot, guarantee an anarchic content. To be clear: I am not calling for anarchists to deny solidarity to the Kurds fighting for autonomy (from the Turkish state, the Syrian state, and from the so-called Islamic State), but anarchist cheerleaders (like Weinberg, Graeber, and many others) don't need to create a false picture of the PKK and its allied/satellite hierarchical cadre organizations in order to justify it. Those whom Lenin called "useful idiots" are always plentiful thousands of miles away.

**Modern Slavery:
The Libertarian Critique
of Civilization**

PO Box 24332
Oakland CA 94623
#3 (Spring/Summer 2014), \$12.95

THE THIRD INSTALLMENT BRINGS US another jam-packed 200 pages. The essays cover a range from the Bonnot Gang to the Situationists during May '68, a book review by Max Stirner, and a much-needed analysis of Chomsky's anarchism by Bob Black (hint: it's not a positive assessment). Wolfi Landstreicher continues his egoist musings, and the second part of a very long essay on the differences between slavery (debt peonage as well as chattel forms) and work avoidance are pleasant additions to McQuinn's "Critical Self-Theory." This is the notion that there should be no a priori assumptions or expectations about how a person's world is perceived and understood; it is anti-philosophy at its finest. For people who've often wondered how you can have any opinions or theories while maintaining a principled intellectual stance against all forms of ideology, this is the essay for you. Jason's first sentence: "Critical self-theory is intentionally presuppositionless, non-ideological theory." It's well worth the challenge. Most welcome is Wolfi's entertaining evisceration of David Graeber's *Debt: The first 5,000 years*.

Accomplices Not Allies.

Abolishing the Ally Industrial Complex:
an Indigenous Perspective and Provocation; version 2
Indigenous Action Media | indigenouaction.org

Aint no PC Gonna Fix It, Baby;

a critique of ally politics
sweet_things@riseup.net

**The Militant Outcome of Our Struggle is Dependent
on How We Treat Each Other;
an internal analysis**

Oakland APOC (no contact information listed)

Who Is Oakland:

Anti-Oppression Activism, the Politics of Safety, and State Co-optation
Escalating Identity
available at: escalatingidentity.wordpress.com

I PICKED UP THESE FOUR PAMPHLETS AT TWO DIFFERENT TABLES AT THE EAST Bay Anarchist Conversation and Book event.

It's great to see a critical engagement with the numerous authoritarian undercurrents in the premises and occasional actions of various anarchist/autonomist/POC. The individual pamphlets and the combined reader are bound to step on a few toes, and this is as it should be. There's a push-back against the more obvious forms of nationalism (the presumed a priori allegiance of people based, in this case, on POC self-identification) and an implicit conformism based on a few charismatic folks; people recognizing that the *anarchist* part of APOC is meaningful have become more vocal and public in their criticisms of the peer-enforced theoretical unity that has been part of the APOC world from the early 2000s. There are strong words in these offerings, and there's sure to be some heated discussions among folks directly affected — and implicated — in the months that follow. Some of the steps the authors are taking are tentative and some are more determined, but the questions they raise are all good ones, and fully deserving of debate. The Oakland APOC pamphlet (which, the distributor assured me, will be revised; it was hurried to the printer with plenty of typos) especially focuses on how interpersonal conflicts have played out within the local APOC scene as well as how some APOC folks have engaged in conflicts with non-APOC folks: "Recently threats, veiled threats, and acts of violence between POC within the anarchist, autonomist, and revolutionary liberationist mileaus [sic] have increased dramatically... When we treat one another in a loving and respectful manner while standing by our convictions, we foster a decolonial movement with the strength to challenge white supremacy, and all oppressive relations..." The advice is sound, but I am forced to wonder (jaded skeptic that I am), if this sort of critique might not make the folks being called out on their unsavory behavior more cunning and sophisticated in their methods of intimidation, providing them with a new vocabulary to hoodwink the unsuspecting and good-hearted.

Periodicals and publishers exchanging with ajoda

(or that are freely available)

AK Press

674-A 23rd St
Oakland CA 94612
and

AK Press UK

PO Box 12766
Edinburgh EH8 9YE, Scotland

Despite the long-standing mutual annoyances between our respective projects, the departure of RK to PM Press has resulted in something of a new and appreciated direction for AK. The archival and historical importance of a few of their recent books is undisputed. *Direct Struggle Against Capital: a Peter Kropotkin Anthology* (ed by Iain McKay and a mere 680 pages) is the most extensive collection in English of the writings of the anarchist formerly known as Prince, and included excerpts from his most important books (including the long-unavailable *Ethics*); the 97-page introduction should have been published separately. More recently is *The Method of Freedom: An Errico Malatesta Reader* (ed. by Davide Turcato; translated by the indefatigable Paul Sharkey), which thankfully has no similarly cumbersome introduction.

Alternative Press Center

PO Box 47739
Chicago IL 60647
Publishers of the *Alternative Press Index*

Anchorage Anarchy

Bad Press
POBox 230332
Anchorage AK 99523
"A semi-annual publication of Bad Press, an anti- government anarchist project."

Anarchist Studies

c/o Dr Ruth Kinna
Dept of European Studies,
Loughborough University
Loughborough LE11 3TU, England
The go-to place for the best academic anarchism has to offer.

Any Time Now

Affinity Place
Argenta BC V0G 1B0, Canada
Occasional journal of politics and poetry.

AREDHIS

BP 20306
60203 Compiègne Cedex, France
Publishers of *Troploin* newsletter
(in English).

Archivio Famiglia Berneri

Flamma Chessa, Via Travolata, 6
42100 Reggio Emilia, Italy

Autonomea

PO Box 568 Williamsburgh Stn
Brooklyn NY 11211
Publisher of radical books; the best ones I've seen lately include *Contract and Contagion: from biopolitics to oikonomia* (Angela Mitropoulos), *The Power of Neighborhoods and the Commons* (P.M.), *Artpolitik: Social Anarchist Aesthetics in an Age of Fragmentation* (Neala Schleuning), *The Devil's Anarchy: The Sea Robberies of the Most Famous Pirate Claes G. Compaeen & The Very Remarkable Travels of Jan Erasmus Reyning, Buccaneer* (Steven Snelders), *19 & 20: Notes for a New Social Protagonism* (Colectivo Situaciones), and *The Worst Book I Ever Read* (The Unbearables).

Bulletino Archivio G. Pinelli

via Roverto 27
20127 Milano, Italy
Italian-language bulletin focusing on anarchist history; also a public archive.

Bureau of Public Secrets

PO Box 1044
Berkeley CA 94701
Home of the most extensive Debordist Situationist archive in English.

Bulletin du CIRA

Avenue de Beaumont 24
CH-1012 Lausanne, Switzerland
Publishers of the French-language journal of the International Center for Research on Anarchism.

CNT

Pza. Tirso de Molina
28012 Madrid, Spain
Spanish-language newspaper of the anarcho-syndicalist CNT.

Collectif Hors d'Ordre

64, rue de Maisonneuve, app.4
Quebec PQ G1R 2C3, Canada

Eastwest; an anarchist newspaper

eastwest@riseup.net
An 8-12 page semi-monthly paper geared to the activist crowd, but also containing tidbits of local history.

Ekintza Zuzena

Apdo 235, Postakutxa
48080 Bilbo Bizkaia, Spain
Spanish- and Euzkara-language quarterly journal of culture and anarchism.

La Fabrique

64 rue Rébeval
75019 Paris, France
Publishers of the French-language works of Tiqqun and the Invisible Committee.

Industrial Worker

PO Box 180195
Chicago IL 60618
Newspaper of the Industrial Workers of the World.

Kate Sharpley Library

2425 Channing Way, PMB 820
Berkeley CA 94704
Invaluable publishers of neglected and/or forgotten moments and personalities in international anarchism.

Little Black Cart

littleblackcart.com
Publishers and distributors of anarchist and anti-political books and journals; the best ones this year have included *Demotivational Training* (Gillaume Paoli), *The Master's Tools: warfare and insurgent possibility* (tom nomad), *The BASTARD Chronicles, 2014: Social War, Canenero: selections from the anarchist paper*, (translated from the Italian by Wolfi Landstreicher), *attentat*, and *The Impossible, Patience: critical essays 2007-2013* (Alejandro de Acosta).

Prisoners' Dilemma

PO Box 95006
Seattle WA 98145

Intended "to create a loosely defined anarchist/anti-authoritarian zine which might appeal to people unfamiliar with those currents of thought".

Raging Pelican

828 Royal St #281
New Orleans LA 70116

Direct-action oriented newspaper.

Rojo y Negro

C/Sagunto, 15
28010 Madrid, Spain

Monthly Spanish-language newspaper
of the other anarcho-syndicalists, the CGT.

Rote Hilfe

Postfach 6444
Kiel 24125, Germany

A journal chronicling the legal troubles
of Leftist (including some anarchist)
defendants and prisoners.

Slingshot

c/o Long Haul
3124 Shattuck Ave
Berkeley CA 94705

Quarterly publication of the (in)famous
Slingshot Organizer.

Small Press Review

PO Box 100
Paradise CA 95969

Solidaridad Obrera

c/ Joaquin Costa, 34, entlo.
08001 Barcelona, Spain

Another newspaper of the CNT.

Solidaridad Obrera

Ap de Correos no 302
08910 Badalona, Spain

Yet another newspaper of the CNT.

South Chicago Anarchist Black Cross

P.O. Box 721
Homewood, IL 60430

Publishers of pamphlets and flyers in support of
various prisoners, including some anarchists.

The Student Insurgent

1228 Univ of Oregon
Eugene OR 97403

The usual annoying
students-playing-at-anarchism.

Turning the Tide

PO Box 1055
Culver City CA 90232

Newspaper of the former Los Angeles chapter
of Anti-Racist Action, now the Inter-Communal
Solidarity Committee.

Upping the Anti:**A Journal of Theory and Action**

998 Bloor St W PO Box 10571
Toronto ON M6H 4H9, Canada

A journal that tries to bridge the gap between
grad students and street activism, tending quite
unfortunately toward Popular Frontism.

**Amazing Fact!**

Did you know? During the Black Death, printing got a big boost from the amount of linen fabric made available for papermaking by victims of bubonic plague. Before that, most printing was done on vellum made from animal skins. Thanks, plague!

**This issue of ajoda
designed and printed
by**



Eberhardt Press

www.eberhardtpress.org

Marking ten years
of printing for
the People.

Embarrassments to the Milieu

The Autonomous Womyn's Front

The Autonomous Womyn's Front is a rising anarcha-Feminist organization.

The Autonomous Womyn's Front is a national anarcha-Feminist activist outreach project which aims to advocate for largely under-represented groups of the people of America, who are often marginalized by American politics and the economy. We plan to reach, educate, and influence an international audience with protests, activism, online courses, and instructional videos.

The Autonomous Womyn's Front is anti-authoritarian, anti-capitalism organization, using the system to turn itself inside out, and rip it apart.

We plan to become a super organization, supporting the underclass, and underprivileged, through servicing them via activism, and creating employment opportunities for them. We want to liberate people from conventional forms of accepted practice, influenced by systemic and institutionalized discrimination. But we need your help. We need funding for the following to help us start-up a revolutionary movement.

Required Resources:

Communications & Tech (\$2,145.21): The funds for communications and tech go towards obtaining computers, cameras, microphones, and the required software to help spread our message via seminars and the internet.

Uniforms (\$668.10): The funds for uniforms go towards obtaining shirts, pants, boots and jackets for the activists.

Lobbying & Organizing (\$800.40): The funds for lobbying and organizing go towards creating and obtaining a voice for the political advocacy carried by The Autonomous Womyn's Front.

Travel & Transportation (\$1,236.50): The funds for travel and transportation go towards transporting our activists to and from their required destinations for lobbying, actions, and political elections.

Product Development (\$1,000): The funds for product development go towards the creation of new items to support The Autonomous Womyn's Front. Things for everyday use like business cards, clothing, pens, pencils, educational books, calendars, DVDs, and more!

Major Concerns:

Sex Worker's Rights: In America, we have made sex into a commodity, and have sexualized women in general. With pornography, the sex economy has created a demand for prostitution, but it remains illegal, disallowing women to benefit from it. The sex economy has also introduced a grossly abusive industry where drugs, STDs, rape, and trafficking run rampant. Our solution, is to decriminalize prostitution, and help sex workers organize unions to protect their rights and labour value.

Industrial Exploitation: Many working-class individuals in the US feel the pressure of having to perform to the standards of politicians, with the risk of having vital resources revoked from them if they refuse to comply. For example, Sen. Mitch McConnell (R-KY) voted against increasing the minimum wage 17 times, while voting to increase his own pay.

Civil Rights (Trans people): In the past decade, murders of trans people by both law enforcement and civilians have been excused, simply because these people did not represent the sex/gender identities they were assigned to at birth. Outed and discovered trans people are at constant risk of attack with no justice, and our solution is to loosen laws restricting transgender individuals from acting on their own, and fully embracing their identity.

Marijuana: By now, many people are aware of the medical and recreational benefits of marijuana. But it is kept illegal, for the government's inability to profit from it. Legalizing it (for both medical and recreational use) would make great strides for the American economy, and

decrease the unnecessary criminalization of American citizens.

Squatting: According to Amnesty International USA, there are more than 5 times as many homes as there are homeless people, and yet, housing seems to be an issue. Our society likes to paint the poor and homeless as dirty, lazy beggars with no ambition—but this is an incredibly inaccurate misrepresentation of these people.

Since employment opportunities, and gov't benefits are not accessible to all disadvantaged people, squatting is a reasonable solution to the issue of homelessness as well as involuntary poverty.

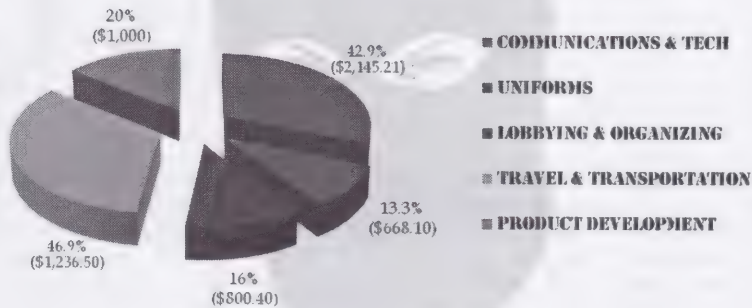
Immigration: Far too many people with indigenous blood are negatively effected by American wars, border laws, and "the war on terrorism". For this, these people are negatively effected when fleeing to America for the economic opportunities they hear so much about, "The American Dream".

Education: American education is mostly empty and is of no service to American children, or is destructive to their physical and intellectual advancement. American children are not taught very many (if any) useful skills in the public education system, and we seek to change that via organization and election.

The Autonomous Womyn's Front exists to create more valid options for those who are restricted from accessing them. To create opportunities for those who have little to no chance of economic, political, or social stability—as well as to create a group to confront and educate the privileged people in our society.

We want to be able to lobby for the rights of marginalized people of America, and eventually—internationally. From this I hope to develop political growth, re-education, criticism, discussion and action.

DISTRIBUTION OF FUNDS



\$5USD

Autonomous Ally

Supporters donating \$5 will receive a video via email from 2 of activists of The Autonomous Womyn's Front, thanking you for your contribution!

\$10USD

First Wave Warrior

Supporters donating \$10 will receive a button pin, and poster of their choice.

\$15USD

Second Wave Warrior

Supporters donating \$15 will receive a pin button, poster, and t-shirt or bag of their choice.

\$25USD

Third Wave Warrior

Supporters donating \$25 will receive a t-shirt, a mugs, a pen, a pin button, a bag, and a post card.

\$30USD

Fourth Wave Warrior

Supporters donating \$30 will receive a t-shirt, a pen, 2 pin buttons, a bag, and a post card.

\$50USD

Fifth Wave Warrior

Supporters donating \$50 will receive a t-shirt, a poster, a pen, 2 pin buttons, a hat, a bag, and a post card.

\$75USD

Comrade

Supporters donating \$75 will receive t-shirt, a mug, 2 posters, a full set of stamps, a pen, and 2 pin buttons.

\$100USD

Insurgent

Supporters donating \$100 will get a custom AWF flag hand-sewn onto any cloth item of their choice, along with a t-shirt, mug, bag, and 2 pin buttons.

\$250USD

Guerrilla Grrl/Geye

Supporters donating \$250 will receive a custom AWF flag hand-sewn onto their personal cloth item of choice, along with t-Shirts, a mugs, 2 posters, a full set of stamps, a pen, 2 pin buttons, and a post card.

\$300USD

Contemporary Comrade

Supporters donating \$300 will receive 2 t-Shirts, a mugs, 2 posters, a full set of stamps, a pen, 2 pin buttons, a 2016 calendar, a hat, a bag, a hoodie, and a post card.

\$500USD

Sister/brother of Resistance

Supporters donating \$500 will receive a lifetime membership at The Autonomous Womyn's Storefront, 2 t-Shirts, a mug, a miniature flag, a poster, a full set of stamps, a pen, a 2016 calendar, a hat, a bag, a hoodie, 2 pin buttons, and 3 post cards.

\$1,000USD

Mother of the Revolution

Supporters donating \$1,000 will receive a lifetime membership at The Autonomous Womyn's Storefront, 2 t-Shirts, 2 mugs, a full sized flag, a poster, a full set of stamps, 2 pens, a 2016 calendar, a hat, a bag, 2 hoodies, post cards, 2 pin buttons, and a 30 minute skype chat with Nocturnus herself.

Embarrassments Dishonorable Mentions:

cbmilstein.wordpress.com/2014/10/08/when-unicorns-speak/
and www.anarchistagency.com/press-briefs/on-gay-marriage/

Letters



Not Hippie Shit

THANKS FOR THE REVIEW OF THE *Fifth Estate* in your issue No. 75 and for your appreciation of our current efforts. Reviews are quite personal, but I was a bit taken aback by the

space devoted to denouncing former *FE* editor, Andy Smith.

Whatever you may think of his editorial reign (which involved many of the same people working on the magazine today, including myself), it is entirely accurate to say that if it hadn't been for him, there would be no *Fifth Estate* today.

In fact, his 104pp, 2005 40th anniversary edition is not only the biggest issue every published by the *Fifth Estate*, but I would say one of the best. It is still available through us or Little Black Cart.

I'm quite surprised to see your characterization of the content of his 20 issues containing perhaps 400 articles or so being reduced to "hippie shit" and "irrelevant psychedelic paeans to Allen Ginsberg." I was just looking at two issues from ten years ago that he edited, one on Education and the other on Primitivism, and would defend both as excellent editions filled with sharp critiques including a David Watson excerpt whose writing was not missing from *Fifth Estate* pages during the Smith era.

I'm sure you can find a few articles on face-painting, dancing-in-the-flowers articles, but these were always in the very distinct minority, ones which I had no problem with then or now. The preponderance of every issue was always

straight ahead anarchism as far as my reading of them go. But hey, for a grim, old class struggle anarchist like me, a little weirdness or "hippie shit" didn't detract from the magazine's overall revolutionary trajectory and could be a welcome respite from gloom both of our publications often evince.

There's often a tendency to concentrate on the smallest part of a project to find things we disagree with and I've done that with this letter. Overall, your issue is filled with engaging articles and excellent design. My congratulations to all involved with its production.

Best wishes and solidarity,

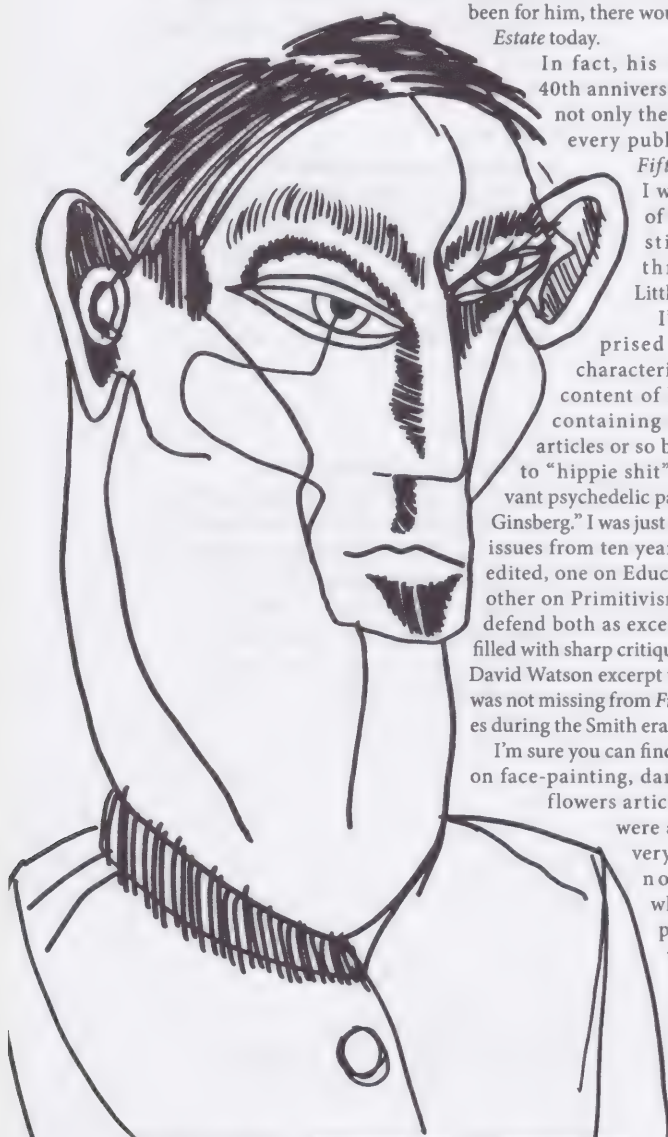
Peter Werbe
Fifth Estate
fe@fifthestate.org
FifthEstate.org

Lawrence responds: My intention wasn't so much to denounce Andy as much as it was to register a more mundane assessment of him in person (as the author of a reactionary rant; also see the single-sentence appraisal in the next letter) as well as an editor (who presided over an excess of crap). I recognize that without him at the helm, *FE* would not have continued, but my question is: Would that have been such a bad thing? When we Berkeley folks took over AJODA from Jason, the transition was certainly clunky and awkward, but there was never a shift in tone or content. We have continued on the path charted by the original editorial bunch, and hope that the overlap/continuity of many contributors is evidence of that. By way of contrast, when Andy was keeping the *FE* ship afloat during his tenure, the tone and content of *FE* broadened to include material that I personally consider irrelevant to a general project

of abolishing capitalism and the state. It's just my preference, certainly, but I've had plenty of conversations with other anarchic folks over the years who'd experienced a similar dismay and sadness at some of the material in that range of issues (359-375, the entire Table of Contents of which Peter sent me via follow-up email to jar my memory). What I remember, from before those unfortunate years, is diligently and uninterruptedly reading each issue front to back over the course of several days, savoring the density of the prose (I didn't even mind the six- or seven-page essays that confounded my attention span and often required two or three readings to comprehend) and trying to expand my understanding of anarchism and a more general refusal of meditated and colonized life by the intrusions of machines (mega- and otherwise) and an increasing reliance on technology. An anti-electoralist essay in one of the earliest issues I read (in the early 80s) marked a turning point in my development as a conscious anarchist, for which I will always be thankful. But sometime in the 2000s, Andy published an apologia for casting one's vote in a presidential election (no less!), in which the author deployed the typical whiny liberalism too often encountered among desperate activist types (excuse the redundancy). Such a turnabout was horrifying in a general sense, but also sorely disappointing to me on a personal level. I stand by my assessment and am very gratified at the old-new direction of *Fifth Estate*.

When Birds Collide

THANKS FOR SENDING ME A COPY OF *Black Seed*, which, surprisingly, they let come in... It's heartening to see people pick up where GA left off and in Grand Rapids of all places! A conservative bastion if ever there was one.



So here I am at last on the page and wondering if you had any thoughts on my article, "Occupy Schmoccupy." I really did not expect you to reprint it, as it's old news, but much harder hitting that Uri Gordon's, which you did publish. As a long-time advocate of revolutionary violence the point I was trying to make was: no violence, no real change, no revolution.

It seems obvious to me, non-violence is founded on egotistical prudence, that is, cowardice. Today, most people recognize there's a problem and that it is corporate control and destruction of the world in which we live. The brave choose to set about fomenting a violent revolution to slaughter the SICK and their 'ophants, either one by one or all at once, as the opportunities present themselves. After all, it is a war for the survival of both the species and the planet itself.

Most of the cowards will stay home because it's the "prudent" thing to do, or, worse, continue to serve the masters, thus the police are clearly cowards. The rest, while recognizing the problem, are afraid to risk themselves and the "life" they pretend to have, will on occasion engage in non-violent protest, especially, if they feel it is a "safe" protest, in order to assuage their guilt for not taking any risk in opposing the masters.

While I can appreciate your clarifications as to your use of "unsolicited," [in private correspondence] it in no way changes the definition of the word. Thus, when you solicit articles from your readers, as in "Anarchy welcomes submissions. Please send us your letters, art, photos, essays, news, and reviews of anarchist media," it is probably better, when declining to publish

same, you simply state why instead of arguing you only publish members of your elitist group, because, my friend, that's not anarchy, is it?

Naturally, I sympathize with any editor who has to deal with the dreck that is submitted for publication. We both know the majority of Americans are functionally illiterate and, if you're anything like me, we both wish most of those who went to college stayed illiterate. I, however, fall into neither category.

Having had the time to closely read *AJODA* No. 75, I found the content very palatable to my tastes. More so than most of the anarchist press as it exists today. The same can be said for *Black Seed* (thanks again). Let me begin with Chomsky, who epitomizes "egotistical prudence," in my book. No doubt, he was a brilliant mind, but certainly not an infallible one. I appreciate some of what he says vis a vis the prolonged genocidal assault on Palestine by the neo-nazi zionists. I've not seen his essay in *In These Times*, but I've seen his 14-page interview in *Prison Legal News*, April 2014. Have you seen that one?

The book reviews were on topics I'm interested in and were well done. I was struck by your method of reading, which is similar to mine. I make light penciled x- or check-marks next to lines or paragraphs that draw my attention. Then, I reread those sections while taking typewritten notes and erasing the pencil marks as I go... I, too, rarely underline anymore, although I do have a few books I intend to keep that are underlined and heavily annotated.

Looking over my pencil marks on your review of Jonathan Marks' *Why I*

Am Not a Scientist, I wonder whether Marks' "Pontiac salesman" analogy regarding Dawkins was chosen because Pontiacs are no longer made. Marks' title choice, like Russell's, is a statement of opposition and, as G.C. Lichtenberg points out, "To do just the opposite is always a form of imitation," or as Sever put it in *Black Seed*, "Opposites always obey the same paradigm." This is why I check anyone who calls me an atheist. I'm not opposed to "god" because it's ridiculous to oppose a thing that does not exist. I do agree with Marks' assessment of scientists in general, as I've long held most of them are little more than bootlicking lackeys of the masters. 'Ophants of the SICK, just like the

police, bureaucrats, and politicians, etc. I will read this book if I can get my hands on it.

As for *Fire and Flames*, the name "Geronimo" always makes me think of Geronimo ji Jaga (Elmer Pratt) adn his frame-up by the police, and, of course, the Chiricahua Apache, who led the resistance against the U. S. government's genocidal policies way back in the day.

Echoes of *The Scream* notwithstanding, the "Eight Theses," by the obviously British Institute of Precarious Consciousness, begins with an unproven premise asserted as a fact: "human life began with abundance...and periodically returns to abundance." Taking it as a given that

Something to Say?

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humans originally lived off the land in family groups of subsistence hunter-gatherers, then the first part of this premise, what I call the Garden of Eden syndrome, fails because it's extremely difficult to live and survive as a hunter-gatherer. This is indicated by the hardships of the few surviving hunter-gatherer groups that exist today. Of course, the argument can be made that they live in extreme marginal environments, which wouldn't necessarily be the case when human life began. Nevertheless, I've lived off the land in Michigan woodlands, an optimal survival environment, and can assure you it's not easy even when you have a cabin, clothing, fishing gear, a bow, a rifle and a shotgun. Thus, the only thing "clear" about Savage's theory of abundance is all the existing proofs are stacked against it.

I do, however, agree that capitalism both overproduces and creates

artificial scarcity in the quest for profits, which is obvious, yet ignored — a bigger "public secret" than boredom or anxiety, I should think. Boredom is clearly a "reactive affect," albeit it's arguable whether it was the dominant one in the '60s in France and, particularly, in the U.S. Moreover, while anxiety may well be a reactive affect now, whether it is "dominant" or not seem eminently debatable.

It does seem to me, however, defining a "public secret" as "something that *everyone* knows, *nobody* admits or talks about," (my emphasis) is a bit too inclusive. To speak in such absolute terms when framing an argument is self-defeating. Clearly, not everyone knows something and some people may well admit it and talk about it. The Situationists certainly did.

I could go on but suffice it to say, while there's much I agree with in this article, I don't think making points by

fiat — that is unsupported by facts or even cognizable theories is the way to go to "break out of the impasse in which we are stuck." Quite the opposite, as in some respects it leads us deeper into the morass, as it seems to have done here.

Moving on, I dug Bob Black's article. As easy enough sell, because I despise work. Whenever I find something turning into work, I usually stop doing it. That's the one thing I hate about being in prison because I have to work to get out of here asap. Bummer!

Uri Gordon's seemingly well-intentioned article has made the error of criticizing reformists while offering the reformist platitude of "social justice" as a goal. Then again, maybe Uri does not know what justice means? It comes from the Latin *jus*, sacred formula or ritual. In essence, it means punishment of people labeled wrongdoers by the state. As Raoul Vaneigem put it, "Justice, dignity, nobility, freedom...these words that yap and howl, are they anything other than household pets whose masters have calmly awaited their homecoming since the time when heroic lackeys won the right to walk them on the streets? To use them is to forget that they are the ballast that enables power to rise out of reach." See, my "The 'yap and howl' of justice," *News & Letters*, July-August, 2010, p8.

My review of "Media Reviews": Have not heard of *anchorage anarchy*. Have heard of and read Jason Rodgers and, while he may think "a middle aged, white commie" (sic) trying to sell him books by Malcolm X is weird, it's undoubtedly weird Jason, apparently, does not know Malcolm X and NOI parted ways before he died and he did not write about NOI theology. I've written *The Anvil*, no reponse. You're bang-on about *Fifth Estate*: Andy Sunfrog (he of the numerous akas), was the worst and he was personally very creepy. Most of the punk scene, especially the women, were relieved when he moved to Tennessee. I'm unfamiliar with *Fireworks* but will send 'em a letter and see what pops.

Let's see, what's left? I do agree with you on the importance of studying history. Many don't study history, or anything else, and we all suffer the consequences. It's been my experience, most people don't care about history because they're either stupid or lazy or both. The number one

excuse among activists, especially nationalists, seems to be the old saw, "history is written by the victors," so there's nothing there for us. Sounds good, but not true. There are many histories and not all are written by the winners. Besides, I've been able to learn a lot from even the most biased history books.

I do not know who Peter Georgacarakos is, but he seems to be engaged in an ongoing discourse with *AJODA*. Also, whatever he's smoking is pretty spectacular. God's Pussy, maybe? Is "Pine Knot, KY" code for Humboldt County? I cannot remember ever having read so many inane and insane statements one after the other, aside from in *The Weekly Standard*, so let me run it down, bearing in mind I don't know what he felt "compelled to respond" to or if he's in the middle of a psychotic break.

Peter does seem "compelled" to define anarchy as a science, even referring to it as "[t]he science of anarchy." It is not a science, and to be clear, neither is Marxism. Nevertheless, he "believe[s], Anarchy should be biocentric." Like, say, life maybe? A given if ever there was one.

What's not a given is that humans "are nature." No way are humans the totality of nature as this statement implies. I'd say "nay," but who the fuck uses that word in the 21st century, aside from Peter? Humans are, obviously, a part of nature. A part of nature that is capable of separating from and affecting nature, unlike the rest of the species on this planet which are virtually inseparable from nature. Sometimes the separation and affect works to our benefit and many times it does not, as current conditions on the planet indicate.

Clearly, Peter is not clear on the concept of what "nature actually is." As for how "it really operates," well, he does think "birds do not collide," when they most certainly do. I've seen birds hit windows, trees, fences and each other. As I type this letter, we have a mourning dove out on the yard with a busted wing because it collided with the fence. Bald eagles hunt flocks of snow geese on ice by swooping in low to panic them into taking off, forcing a number of collisions in order to pick off the injured birds.

Reading on, here's a sentence that goes to the very heart of anarchy: "We *must* — enthusiastically — *obey* natural law." (My emphasis.) A veritable

kill shot, because it's the very antithesis of anarchy! And what is "natural law," anyway? Is gravity a natural law? If so, we humans overcame it, didn't we? Or, is it "eat or be eaten?" Which is what Peter posits, when he states, "Humans are, and have always been, *predators* (sic)." This, of course, is not the case. Humans have been both prey and predator throughout history, especially of each other, and likely were both prior to the advent of civilization, as well.

Unfortunately, for Peter's rather risible stand against "so many Anarchists," arbitrary and conclusory statements, unsupported by facts, do not make a case or even an argument, much less a coherent one. Neither does nonsense like, "The highest necessity is the totality of reality itself." Really? The "highest necessity" for who or what? No doubt the totality is the reality, just as reality is the totality. But this is barely a clever tautology.

After parsing less than two paragraphs of Peter's letter, it appears his "highest necessity" should be to "adjust" to the fact that he's fully of shit and just got called on it! Although, I suspect this won't be the first or the last time. I can only wonder why you bothered to publish his letter, unless it was to hold him up to scorn and ridicule. If so, it worked.

The other letters weren't much fun. Bob Black makes sense to me nearly all the time. I did find it refreshing Duane Rouselle, who I'm unfamiliar with, took the time to admit to, and address, the errors in his book. Although, I do disagree with a few of his points.

Also noted was your response to FD stating, "We print all letter sent to us." As this one, mine that is, is so long, I doubt you'll want to print the whole thing. So feel free to edit via topic, such as, "revolutionary violence" or my critique of the first two paragraphs of Peter Georgacarakos's bizarre letter. Although, I'd appreciate it if you wouldn't edit within the subject you choose to publish. Thanks.

Disobediently yours,

Rand W. Gould

C-187131 Thumb Correctional Facility
3225 John Conley Drive
Lapeer, MI 48446
www.freerandgould.com

P.S. When I'm not ranting about

something or other, I write poetry where it seems I also rant about something or other.

Day of Mourning
In memoriam: Russell Means,
d. 22 October 2012

I mourn for America,
a beautiful land,
dying a slow, choking death
from the chains of the toxic West

I mourn for the Indians,
the original people,
robbed of their birthright
by diseased and psychotic settlers

I mourn for them too,
the not-so-original people,
with minds so full of mediated fallacies
that they say to hell with all the rest

I mourn for all those,
blinded by greed,
wasting lives grabbing and clutching
at everything they're told that they need

I mourn for the victims,
families and communities,
destroyed by America's endless wars
for the plunder of their land and resources

BUT MOST OF ALL

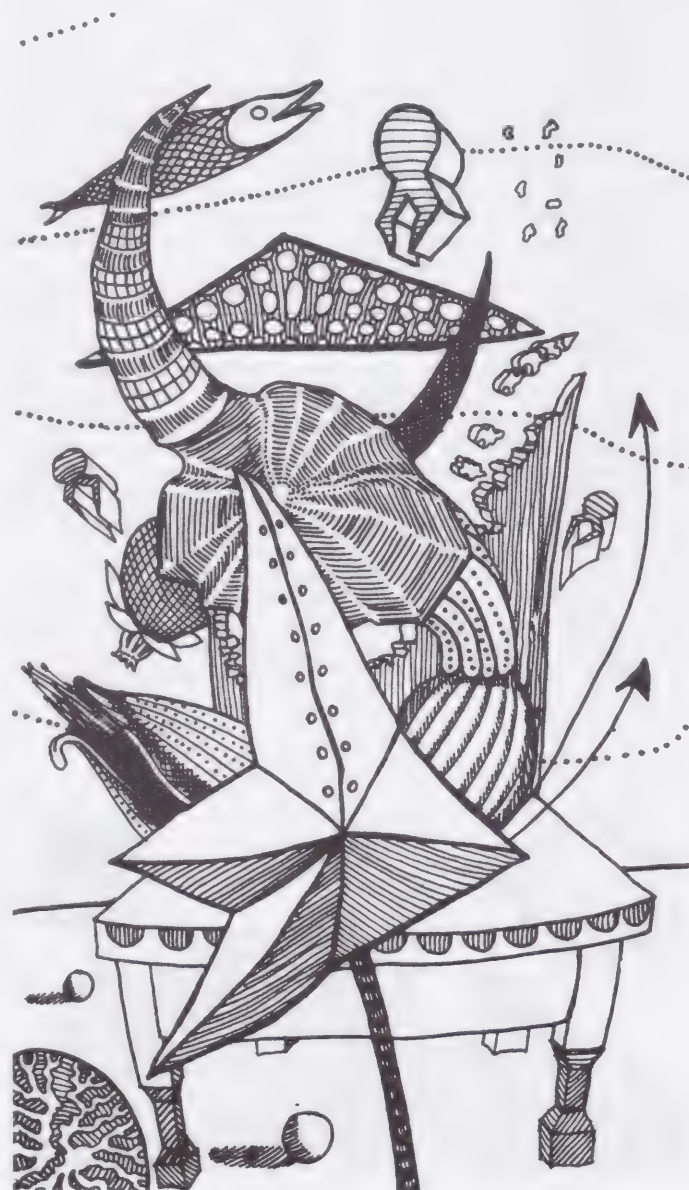
I mourn for our world,
our blue-green mother,
who, suffering the insufferable,
is dying because of us—her own seed

Lawrence responds: We did delete three paragraphs from your letter, where there was some personal material. Other than that, your letter is intact. Regarding the allegation that we only publish "members of your elitist group," what is there to say? There's no such group, elitist or otherwise. We publish authors whose writings we find provocative and engaging, even when we disagree with the content; we also appreciate that minimal editorial changes are required when working with them. We tend to continue to publish writers who've written for us before. When we receive essays and rants that present editorial challenges (for example, time constraints due to our publishing schedule or because we don't feel the topic needs to be featured as an essay or column), more often than not we place them in the letters section.

In addition, since we are now on an annual publishing schedule, we decided (with Rand's permission) to ask Peter if he wanted a chance to respond to Rand's comments. He agreed.

Peter G responds: Like Bob Black's essay in the same issue as my letter, Gould's response is unscientific and anti-philosophical — when it isn't simply sophomoric — and essentially deserves no reply, but I'll descend into the pig-stye of mediocrity for a few moments if only to

point out how utterly silly it all is. I made scientific and philosophical (i.e. logical) points and supported them with empirical evidence and reasoned extrapolation. Black and Gould made rhetorical points and supported them with sententious flourish; and never the twain shall meet. In choosing for oneself the type of anarchist one is, one is essentially choosing for all anarchists in that one thereby creates an image of anarchy as one believes it ought to be. For the record, many self-proclaimed "anarchists" have claimed that I'm



full of shit, including in this magazine, but not one has ever really tried to demonstrate that anything I've stated was false or even misconstrued, never mind actually accomplished the deed, and Gould follows in this long slimy tradition of pseudo-debate, full of sound and fury, signifying nothing. I clearly never claimed that anarchy is a science; I merely referred to a "science of anarchy" — that is, for the sake of slow thinkers, the scientific study of the concept "anarchy." Is "political science" a misnomer because "politics" is not a "science," or is Gould parsing because he is incapable of propositions? Science cannot produce our basic values, but it can give us the most reliable means of deriving and promoting them. I have tried to elevate anarchist debate to the level of scientific and philosophical debates, but Gould and most others insist on degrading it to the level of political sophistry. Hence Gould makes grand claims without paying attention to the very definitional exactitude I've been trying to inject here. For example, in my discussion of local rules generating global behavior, I referred to flocks of birds and the fact that without central guidance, birds in a flock "do not collide." I did not claim that birds never collide under any conditions; only that they usually do not. We drive to work and back every day based on the fact that generally, cars on the road "do not collide" — not because they never collide. Under extreme circumstances, birds and cars indeed collide, but because these are anomalies, local rules indeed generate adequate global behavior.

Another example of Gould's

highly uncritical thinking is related to my statements about "nature." First of all, Gould claims that anarchy being biocentric is "a given" — where? In decades of being an anarchist I've met one and only one active anarchist who was truly and thoroughly biocentric — and that was in the mirror. Secondly, Gould's claim that humans are "capable of separating from... nature" is stated but not supported — where is the evidence demonstrating that humans are actually capable of this act rather than that they simply believe that they are? Since the Enlightenment most humans have believed that they are capable of separating from nature, but philosophy and science (including biology, psychology, ecology) have repeatedly shown this to be a delusion. Gould lives in this delusion. As individuals we have a dialectical relationship with the world in that our mutual interactions with others and the environment influence our individuality and vice versa, and thus this is an important point for an anarchist to ponder.

Consider Gould's claim that humans "overcame" gravity. Really? Doesn't Gould mean that humans are capable of defying gravity? And then only temporarily? And again, only under extreme circumstances? In the end, natural law always reasserts itself, a fact which pseudo-anarchists like Gould conveniently ignore. Humans are not capable of separating from nature...

Like Nietzsche, I do not write for lightweight intellectuals and dilettants, as do most of the readers of AJODA, including Gould. I write for those anarchists capable of understanding me.



There is implicit in my ideas a conception of an Integral Anarchism, life as it should be when developed and fulfilled — but what is popular, instead, is Utopianism.

I've spent decades talking to this unresponsive pile of rhetoric we call an "anarchist movement" and probably should have given up years ago. But as long as every hundred guttersnipe responses like this one includes one from a true anarchist happy to discover a fellow-traveler, I'm satisfied. I have *The Ego and Its Own*; the others have Groupthink and Doublespeak. The rest is silence.

Institute for Precarious Consciousness responds: We'd like to thank Rand Gould for taking the time to respond to our theses, even though the response is mostly negative. We'd clarify that the article was written abruptly because it's a persuasive piece aimed at militants. They're theses to provoke thought and discussion — not proven factual claims. A version conforming more closely to academic norms of proof will hopefully be in print in the militant research journal *Interface* by the time this letter appears, and the writer may find this version more to his liking. Individual rewilding by someone raised in modern culture is extremely difficult, and we'd hypothesize that historical and present hunter-gatherers have certain advantages over any

such experiment. These range from mutual support in a communal group, through dense local knowledge of the setting, lessons learned across generations, ludic ways of doing otherwise boring tasks, and unconscious (as well as conscious) values in line with the life one leads. It's not as simple as "run off to the woods and now you're in abundance." There has to be a political economy and a sustaining culture, usually with an indigenous cosmovision, for the whole package to work. Contemporary hunter-gatherers are generally no longer in abundance either, usually because of colonisation or encroachment on remaining wilderness, or because of historical trauma. However, indigenous cultures are generally oriented to abundance values, which are counterposed to capitalist accumulation. This is clear in the work of indigenous scholars such as David Gegeo and Manulani Meyer, independently of anarcho-primitivism and the Man the Hunter tradition. We don't think it's too great a leap to say that indigenous cultures have been constituted historically around the production of active affects, as well as the maintenance of ecological and (in their terms) spiritual balance. However, the important part of Savage's analysis for us is not so much original affluence, as the periodic return to relative abundance. In his account, each time a civilisation approaches the level of meeting



everyone's needs, it goes into crisis and has to re-impose scarcity. This is central to how we understand the need for reactive affects. This tendency to abundance manifested in 14th-15th century Europe, and was headed off through witch-hunts, slavery, and eventually the rise of capitalism. (This argument is probably taken from Federici, Caliban and the Witch). In capitalism, the same tendency is expressed as crises of accumulation (such as the 1970s crisis), when autonomous living is sufficiently possible that capitalism can no longer extort a sufficient profit from labour. In this case, capitalism reimposed scarcity through neoliberalism and repression. At any given time, the system's production of reactive affects (through material as well as psychological practices) prevents an experience of active affects and abundance. Finding ways to overcome the dominant reactive affect is central to defeating a constellation of power.

precariousconsciousness
@hushmail.com

Not an Isolated Story

GREETINGS AJODA PEOPLE, I AM finally getting around to renewing my subscription. I apologize for the delay, but life has been getting in the way of my best intentions. I want to thank you for all your hard work in cutting through the cant and artifice that so dominate the @ milieu. In doing so you have greatly enhanced my critical thinking regarding both @ and the society we currently exist in. I especially appreciate the insights provided by Bob Black, Lawrence Jarach and John Zerzan (not to slight any of your many and varied contributors). My direct involvement in said @ milieu is extremely limited these days. If being forced to endure the various racial and gender fundamentalists that dominate the local scene was not bad enough, the heaping add-ons of personal drama test the mettle of the most dedicated soul. It all finally drove me away. Sadly, mine is not an isolated story.

Sigh.

Anyhow, thanks again for your efforts,

DK
Madison WI

Idaho Using Frequency Against Inmates

NO WORRIES ABOUT WRITING back. Inclosed is official kites. The gang in Idaho are using Frequency against inmates.

I hear transponders are being used Nationally.

Inclosed are kites proving their using Riot Frequency to torture undesirable Anarchists.

This Farmer state hate individuals. They are very Fascist. The gaurds the gangs run together. Their everywhere.

Fuck this motorcycle ass state.

Viva ELF and all the Actions.

Fuck Famous Potatos

Fuck Agroculture

Fuck Civilization

Fuck Technology

Anti-Tech Anti-Civ: ATAC

Fuck Idaho. They set the Forest on Fire

Diffusion of Power

THE PROBLEM WITH PRISON AND Anarchy is that the Cops and the MOB both have power structure that why they call gang Politics for ideals and Politics for Ass Whoopings.

I don't see capitalist drug dealers or child molesters as useful in a world that is Free.

One of the only good things about prison is that everyone learns to use the barter system but extortion is still rampant cause of capitalist upbringing.

I am a Anarcho primitive former ELF Prisoner and I desire very little from cop or the MOB neather are part of the dream of reality in my book.

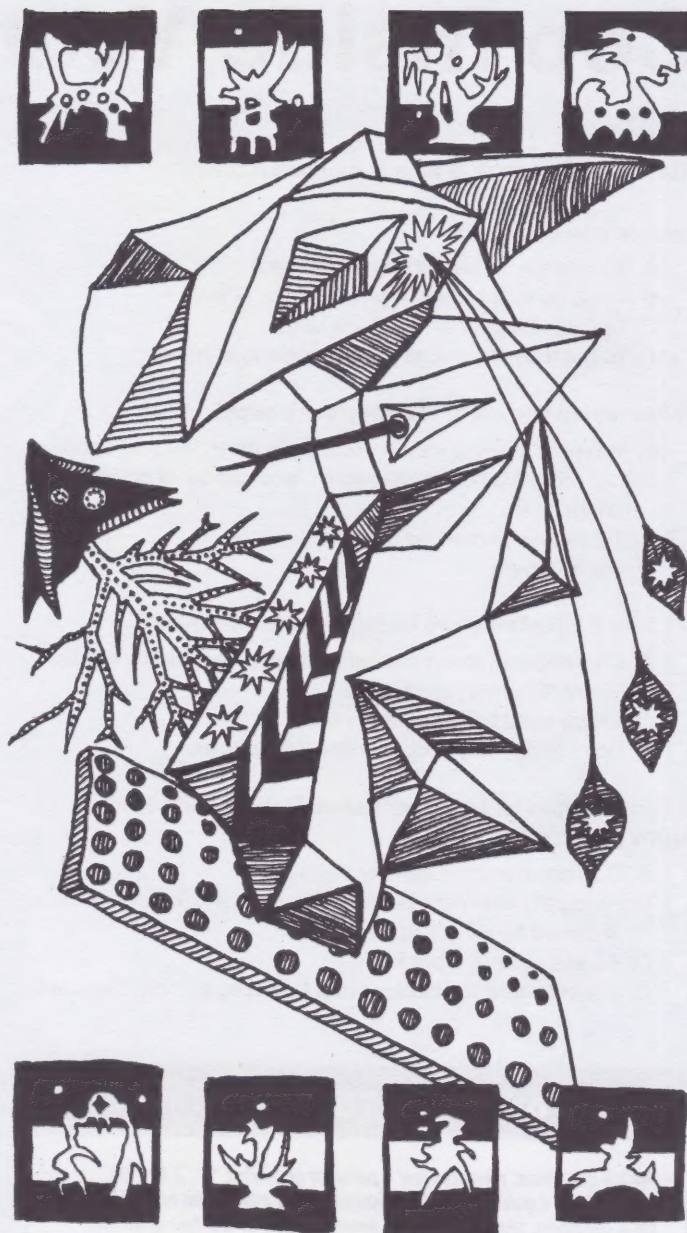
Lets destroy the power.

Waste
fc666.org
James Tucker 104968
Idaho DOC; Idaho Maximum
Security Institution
PO Box 51
Boise ID 83707

Editor's note: due to the kites (prison slang for any sort of written correspondence — in this case the complaints mentioned) having three or four layers of paper, they were illegible.

Read Faster, Lunatics!

I RECEIVED ISSUE #75 OF ANARCHY: A Journal of Desire Armed. It's fuckin' awesome. I'm passing it around the Super-Duper-Uber-Mega-Ultra-Max



where I'm currently held captive. I anticipate that, as a consequence, civilization as we know it will completely collapse in about 5 days.

Maybe sooner, depends how fast these lunatics can read.

If I'm wrong and civilization survives a bit longer, how do I go about continuing to get Anarchy? My writings aren't bad. Check out seanswain.org and my segments in podcasts at ashevillefm.org/the-final-straw. I

suspect I must be saying something worthwhile because the state has pulled the plug on my phone access to shut me down.

Anyway, I really admire your material.

Stay dangerous,
Freedom or Death,

Sean Swain
#243-205 — OSP
878 Coitsville-Hubbard Rd
Youngstown, OH 44505

Have You Killed the Cop Inside Your Head?

Mark ☒ all that apply or write in your own answers.

1. I would call cops:

- ☐ A. To arrange for permits for our protest
- ☐ B. To tie up their phone lines chanting, "Shame!"
- ☐ C. To invite them to sit in a dunk tank
- ☐ D. To get those loud kids to turn down their music

2. What would you do to improve the police?

- ☐ A. Implement civilian review boards to weed out bad cops
- ☐ B. Get more women, transpeople, and people of color on the force
- ☐ C. Tie all their shoelaces together
- ☐ D. Abolish them

3. If I saw a squatter punk being arrested I would:

- ☐ A. Choreograph street theater to dramatize it for the media
- ☐ B. Chant "Shame!" at the cops
- ☐ C. Throw paint balloons at the cops
- ☐ D. Do nothing, they probably need the shower

4. If I saw a window being smashed by someone I didn't know at a protest I would:

- ☐ A. Distract everyone with my puppets
- ☐ B. Physically intervene because chances are the business is owned by an oppressed person
- ☐ C. Hand them more bricks
- ☐ D. Stand toward the back, watch for cops, and call them out

5. How often do you call the cops?

- ☐ A. Any time I need a permit
- ☐ B. If my collective decides
- ☐ C. Whenever I need to get them to the other side of town...
- ☐ D. Fewer times than Bob Black

6. I think cops:

- ☐ A. Need to be brutally lampooned in mass media
- ☐ B. Are tools of the patriarchy
- ☐ C. Should be made to clean public toilets after the revolution
- ☐ D. Are class traitors

7. When I see a line of police in riot gear, I:

- ☐ A. Hide behind my giant puppet
- ☐ B. Gather with my collective, and make sure riot dog is okay
- ☐ C. Mask up and look for something to throw
- ☐ D. Step into the nearest café and order coffee

8. Why do cops patrol in pairs?

- ☐ A. They're less likely to get lost
- ☐ B. One to pick the fight, the other to call backup
- ☐ C. Who cares, as long as there's less space between targets
- ☐ D. You heard they lowered the IQ requirement again, right?

9. The best thing I've heard of a cop doing was:

- ☐ A. Quitting
- ☐ B. Breaking the blue wall of silence
- ☐ C. Going rogue
- ☐ D. Keeping donut stores in business

10. If there were no cops:

- ☐ A. The world would be filled with rainbows and unicorns
- ☐ B. We could form local peacekeeping brigades
- ☐ C. I'd have no one to throw paint balloons at...
- ☐ D. Anarchy!

Key For Issue 75

For all questions, give yourself 1 point for choosing "A", 2 for "B", 3 for "C", or 4 points for "D". If you checked more than one answer for a question, give yourself the average value of the two answers.

If you wrote in your own answers, subtract 1 point for each extra answer; you are unconfined by our bubbles!

Add all your points together for the survey.
Use the chart below to see where you fall on our scale.

Totals	"How Well Do You Know Your Anarchist History?"
0-11	Please keep reading...we may brainwash you yet!
12-22	We have nothing against feel-good pacifists.
23-33	Would you like to lead an anarchist study group?
34+	Send us a copy of your survey. If you're still anarchist when you turn 30, we'll give you a free t-shirt.

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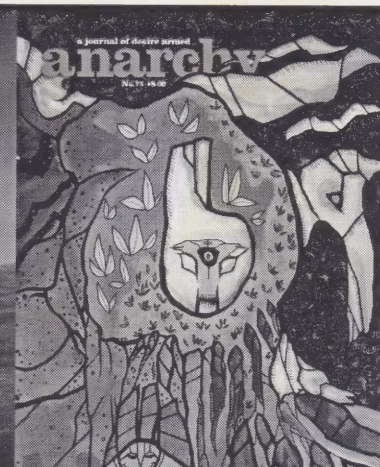
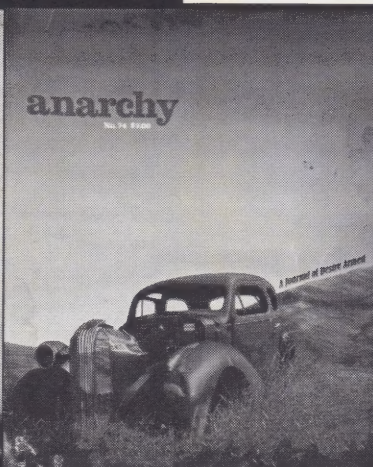
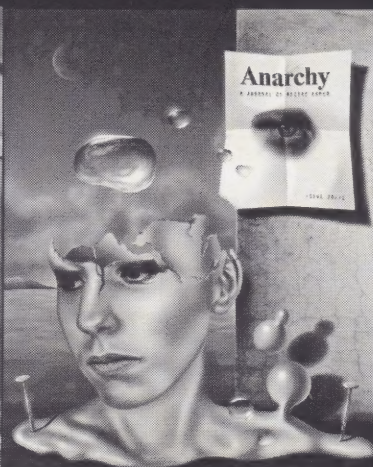
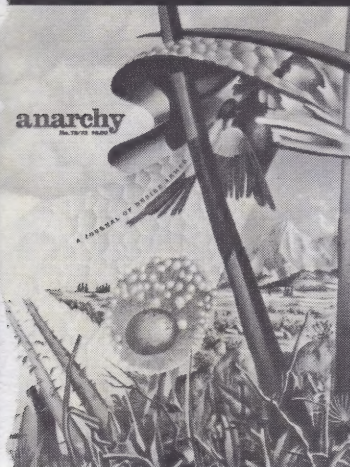
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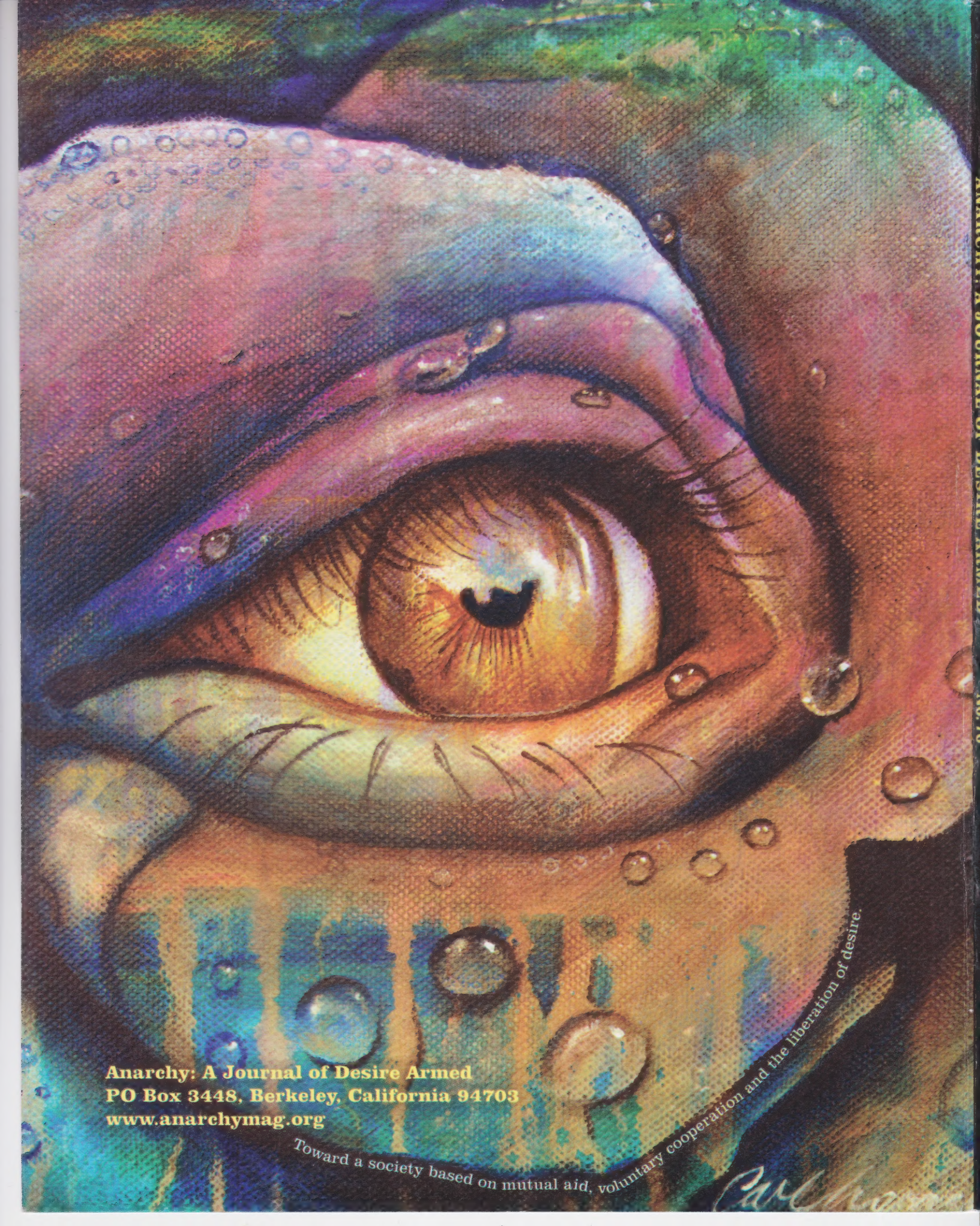
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Carl Harris